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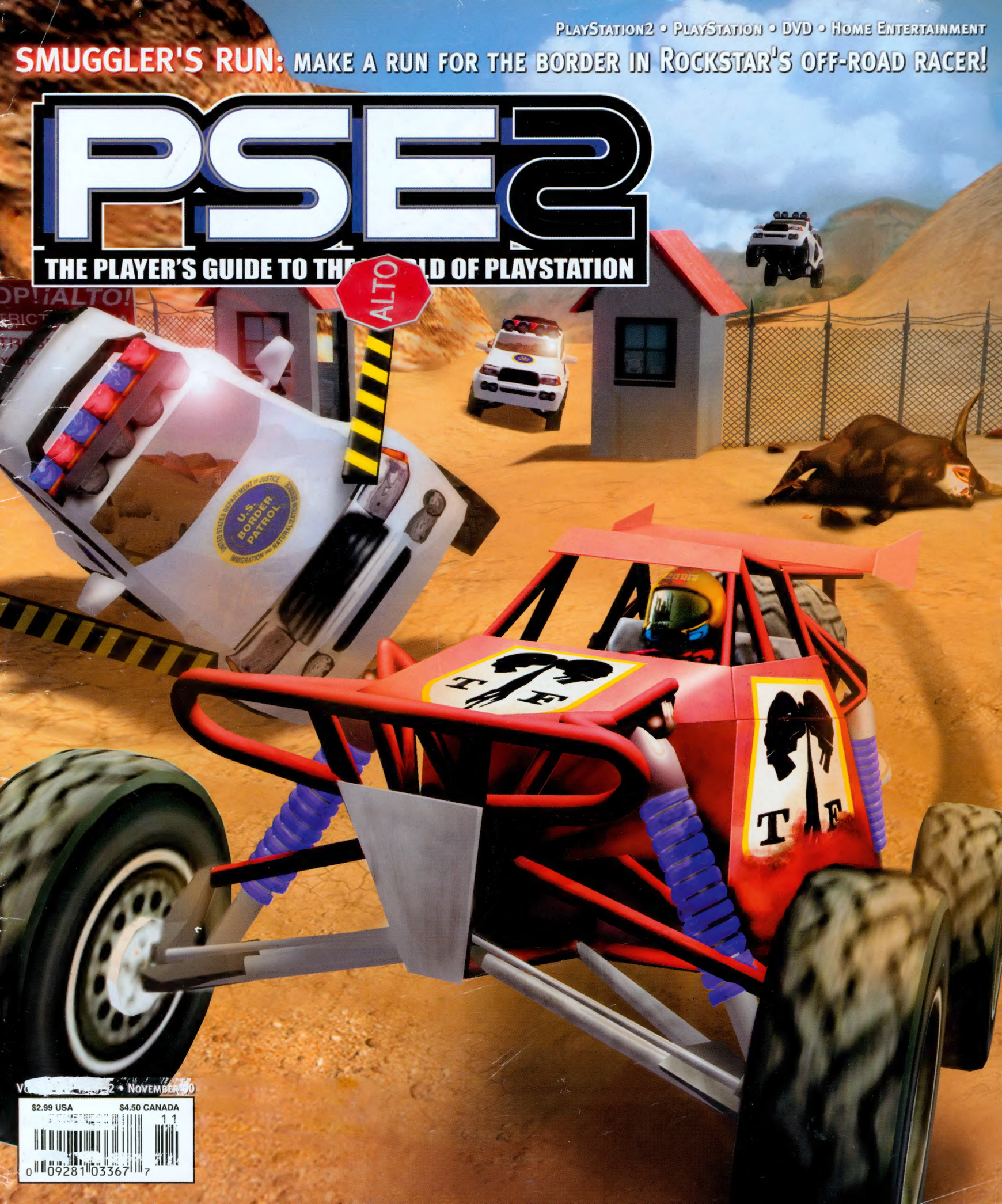
PSE2

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION



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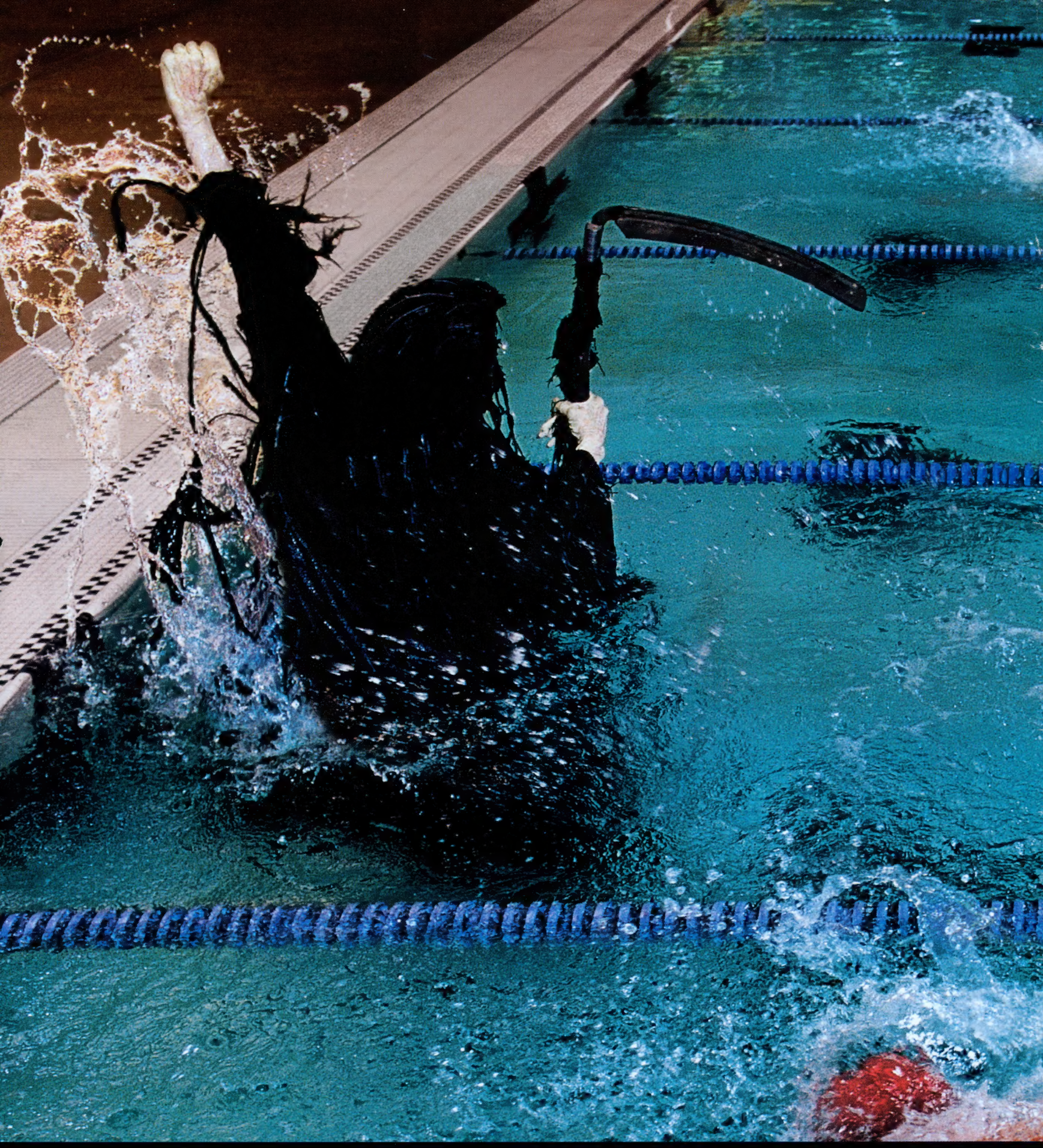

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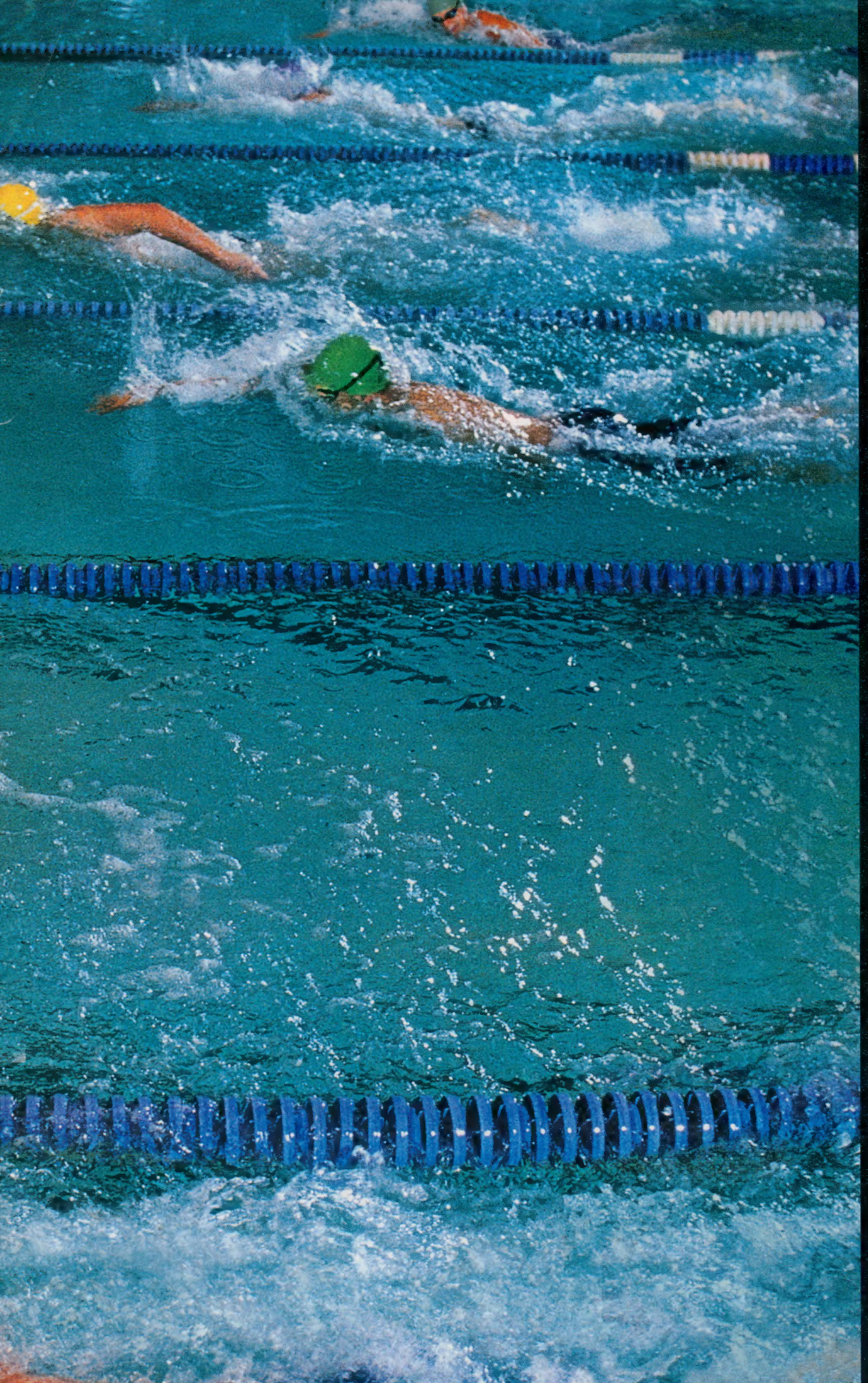

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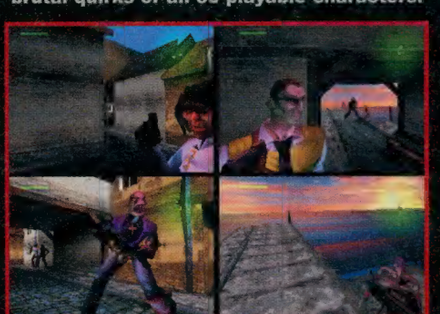

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PSE2

THE PLAYER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

Volume 1 • Issue 2 • November 2000

DAVID JON WINDING *publisher*
GREG OFF *editor-in-chief*
TIM LINDQUIST *producer/designer*

JOHN MCKECHNIE *designer*
MARK ANDROVICH *editor*
ERIC WINDING *editor*

GARY STRASSBERG *writer*
DARIEN ALLEN *writer*
TYRONE RODRIGUEZ *writer*

MARK P. WINDING *advertising*
(650) 372-0942, ext. 45

SUSAN OLSEN-WINDING *manager*

PSE2 is published monthly by Dimension Publishing, Inc. 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. PERIODICALS POSTAGE RATES PAID at San Mateo, CA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PSE2, 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. Newstand distribution is handled through Curtis Circulation Services. For customer service, write: PSE2 Customer Service Department. 1175 Chess Drive, Suite E, Foster City, CA 94404. All editorial product information should be addressed to same. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned or acknowledged. Entire contents copyright ©2000, Dimension Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. "PSE2" is a trade name of Dimension Publishing, Inc. Products in these pages are trade names or trademarks of their respective companies. Dimension Publishing, Inc. and PSE2 Magazine are not affiliated with Sony Computer Entertainment of America or the companies or products contained herein. PlayStation and the PlayStation logos are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A. YOU DIDN'T REALLY THINK YOU'D HEARD THE LAST OF THE CHICKENS, NOW, DID YOU?

THE ISSUE AT HAND

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas

While you are reading the November issue, in reality it's still early September (most magazines typically work on a lead time of a month-and-a-half) for us. And, even though it's too early for the stores to start breaking out the Christmas decorations and pumping muzac renditions of Jingle Bells and Little Drummer Boy through their sound systems, we here at Dimension Publishing can already feel the X-Mas buzz starting to happen all around us. This is mainly due to the impending PlayStation2 launch, which is a mere 44 days away as I am writing this. I'll be the first to admit, a few months back I had lost a lot of faith in the system and was even beginning to get a little downhearted. It seemed like most Japanese developers were either struggling with the hardware or, instead, making quick and dirty ports of already in-development PS1 titles. This was compounded by delays of some of the bigger and potentially better games that had been originally announced. Thankfully, most of my worries and apprehensions were allayed at E3 and, since then, even more so with such playable gems as: Madden NFL 2001, NHL 2001, SSX, Smuggler's Run, Midnight Club, Armored Core 2, Gun Griffon Blaze, Unreal Tournament, Tekken Tag Tournament, Ridge Racer V, Swing Away Golf, Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2, Star Wars: Star Fighter, DOA: Hardcore and many more. Come October 26th, I am predicting you are going to have a very hard time choosing just one or two games (or however many your pocketbook will allow). At least we can try and help with your PS2 software purchasing decisions, starting with this issue. While we didn't quite fulfill the promise of all launch games reviewed (a good portion of them are still in the final development stages), we do have nine of them rated, including three Platinum titles right out of the gate (you'll have to head inside to find out which). In addition, there are so many new PS2 games being announced, we are having trouble finding the space to show them all.

While it might look like PlayStation software is tapering off, I feel the 32-bit system still has at least one great Christmas left in it. Look for plenty of big games hitting store shelves in the next few months, including: Dino Crisis 2, Tony Hawk 2, Medal of Honor: Underground, Spyro: Year of the Dragon, Crash Bash and Driver 2. Heck, there might even be a few major PS1 surprises for next year (we can only hope for one last run with Gabe Logan before he jumps onto the new hardware).

Well, I've spent as much time away from SSX as I can stand. I hope you enjoy the issue and we'll see you back here in 30 days. Thanks again for reading!

Greg
off@psextreme.com

EDITOR BIOS

GARY STRASSBERG

Gary recently got back from a whirlwind trip to Vancouver, where he spent all of his time playing SSX at EA Canada, burning CDs of screenshots in his hotel room, and drinking ice-cold lagers well into the wee hours. He's still trying to catch up on sleep, but we have no sympathy! Hey, doesn't he still owe us editorial for PSE2: SE? Oh, that's right... he's a book author now!

CURRENTLY PLAYING

SSX
Medal of Honor: Underground
Dragon Valor
NFS: Porsche Unleashed

GREG OFF

Greg is in PlayStation2 heaven these days, which kicked off with EA's SSX and Madden, and is still going strong with Rockstar's Smuggler's Run and Midnight Club. Next on his list are Summoner, Tekken Tag, Unreal Tournament, Armored Core and Gun Griffon Blaze. Now, if people would just leave him alone so he could play them, it would be all good. Maybe if he was a walking grimace...

CURRENTLY PLAYING

SSX
Summoner
Smuggler's Run
Tekken Tag
Unreal Tournament
X-Squad

DARIEN ALLEN

Despite the talk of the power of the PS2, Darien had trouble putting the numbers into a reality-based situation. That was until a graphic designer from a popular development house showed him his creation of the female body using the PS2 tools. Having seen the light, Darien thinks we can rule out Lara Croft having that unnatural look from now on.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Hogs of War
Final Fantasy IX
Spiderman
NFL2K1
Capcom vs. SNK
Star Trek: Invasion

DAVE WINDING

Dave has spent the better part of this past month with a number of PS2 titles — leaving little time for any "recreational" gaming. Alas, Fur Fighters, he knew ye well! He hopes to get back to his multi-platform ways by Thanksgiving (and to get his golf game back in shape!).

CURRENTLY PLAYING

TimeSplitters
SSX
Smuggler's Run
Midnight Club
Madden NFL 2001

TIM LINDQUIST

With an uncanny talent for giving a sexy curve to a clipping path, he does layouts at a blistering speed and still has time to keep his neck shaven, his women happy and teach his daughter to play a mean game of Tapper. He's the Grand Chicken Vizor and he's coming to your town, looking to see if you have any old arcade games out in the shed you want to sell.

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Unreal Tournament
Inferno
Smugglers Run
The Outfoxies
Diablo II
Snacks 'n Jaxson

MARK ANDROVICH

Mark thought he would correct the record regarding last issue's bio which said he purchased X-rated 2600 games at the CGE in Las Vegas. Fortunately, he has no real control over what gets printed in his bio, so he'll just have to count his blessings that his picture wasn't "customized" in Photoshop by the designers (or was it?!?).

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Spyro 3
Spiderman
Crash Bash
Virtua Tennis

ERIC WINDING

After spending the month trying to find the real Slim Shady, Eric has decided it would be more fruitful to just go the rap route himself. So, if you're in the 'burbs, look for a tall, lanky white guy (complete with bleached blonde hair) going by the name of "Salty Cracker".

CURRENTLY PLAYING

Summoner
Summoner
Summoner
Dave Mira BMX

12:00 AM Havana, Cuba.

Go for a jog. Get away from it all.

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INFOGRAMES

CONTENTS

page 22

page 28

page 44

page 45

page 54

Mail 10

We like to hear from our readers and enjoy answering questions the best way we can. Keep those emails and letters coming and we'll keep giving the polite (yet overtly brash) answers that we do so well, every issue, on time, or your pizza is free.

News 14

We've got a special brand of news that only a brash, unbiased PlayStation magazine can report on. We sink our journalistic fangs into the flesh of any and all who oppose us or the PS2, since we are Sony butt-folk and proud of it (no, not really).

Codes 18

A code is a sequence of characters you input on your controller at a certain place in your game to unlock something or things that would normally be hidden or locked. Turn now, to page 18, for examples and further enlightenment, please.

Peripherals 20

Whenever we go out, the people always shout, "John Jacob Jingle Heimer Schmidt." Why? We do not know, but it makes us feel like reviewing controllers, that's for sure. That, and buying term life insurance. That's two things we like.

Cover Story 22

If there's one thing better than term life insurance, it's Smuggler's Run. Hot Ziggity, it's one good game. We do like whomping through the woods, and running from the fuzz like a dog with its balls on fire. Yeeeee haw!

Features 26

While the others were out setting traps for Heffalumps that didn't exist, we were out getting the scoopage on the latest in the Test Drive series — OffRoad — Wide Open. That'll teach 'em to believe little Piglet fibs! Oh, bother? You got that right, rumbly boy!

Features 28

Unreal Tournament is, hands-down, the best multi-player FPS available on the PC. The big question is, will it still be good on the PS2, using split-screen and without a mouse? Could it be? Will it be? Let's see!! Wheee!!

Features 30

For this exciting feature, we sit down and talk candid with Larry LaPierre, producer of EA's amazing launch-saver, SSX. We'll ask the questions you dared not even think out loud and the answers may astound you. (Or, not.)

Previews 32

We love to show you the new games that will be coming out. We love to show nice screen shots of them and we love to write nice text about them. (We also love pinching mousepads, but that's another story). We put a little love into each preview and it shines through like a sparkly white diamond, we think.

Reviews 44

When it comes down to it, most people just want to know one thing. We don't know how to help them with that, so we'll just review a bunch of games instead. We'll leave the rest to a lifestyle magazine.

DVD 60

We come clean with the low down dirt on the quality DVD titles. We won't give you no candy-coated, back of the box, advertising jargon like some other DVD review places will. We'll do it up with hard-hitting know-how and a regal flare for the titillating verbage.

Big fun, EA SPORTS BIG SSX

p30

INDEX OF GAMES

007 RACING 43
ALONE IN THE DARK 43
ARMY MEN: SARGE'S HEROES 2 34
BUGS & TAZ TIME BUSTERS 42
COOL POOL 35
CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER 43
CHICKEN RUN 42
DARK CLOUD 36
DRIVER 2 43
DROPSHIP 32
DYNASTY WARRIORS 2 50
ETERNAL RING 46
EVERGRACE 53
FROGGER 2 57
GRAN TURISMO 2000 36
GUN GRIFFON 33
LOONEY TUNES RACING 42
MADDEN NFL 2001 45
METAL GEAR SOLID 2 ..... 34, 36
MIDNIGHT CLUB 35
MORT THE CHICKEN 42
MOTO RACER WORLD TOUR 43
MOTOR MAYHEM 32
MUNCH'S ODDYSEE 32
MUPPET RACE MANIA 56
ONI MUSHA 32
RC REVENGE 34
REAL POOL 35
RIDGE RACER V 48
ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM ROBOTS 43
SILENT SCOPE 52
SILPHEED 33
SMUGGLER'S RUN 22, 23
SOUL REAVER 2 36
SPYRO: YEAR OF THE DRAGON 57
SSX 30, 44
STAR TREK INVASION 56
STREET LETHAL 33
SWING AWAY GOLF 48
RAYCRISIS 43
TEST DRIVE: OFF ROAD — WIDE OPEN 26
THE BOUNCER 35
THE GETAWAY 36
THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE 42
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 28
WILD, WILD RACING 34
WIPEOUT 33
WOODY WOODPECKER RACING 42
X-SQUAD 51

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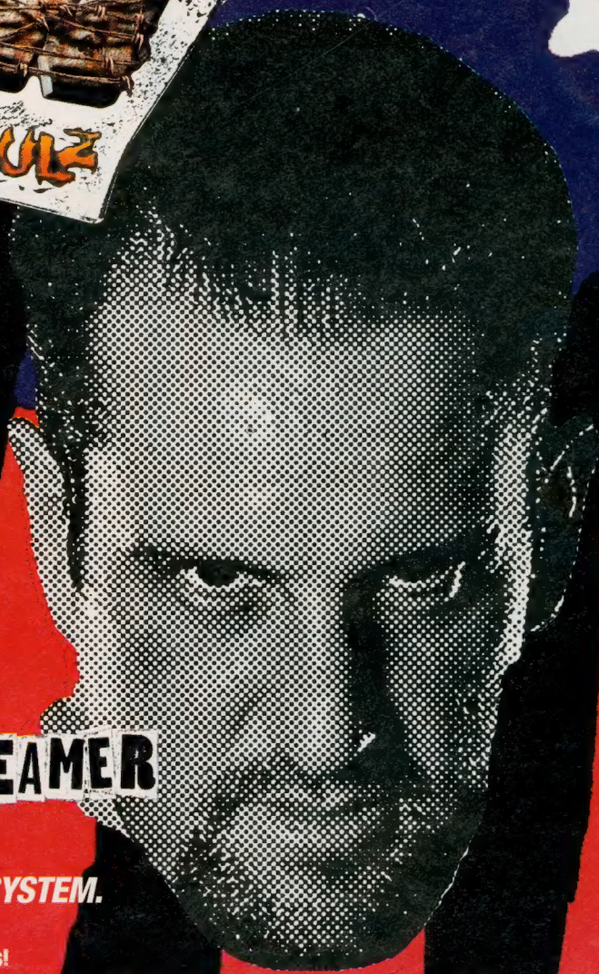

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Animated Blood
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Mature Sexual Themes

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HOT TOPIC

A competing magazine recently ran an editorial criticizing their competitors for complaining that games are too easy. The editorial was specifically addressing EGM and, though it didn't mention it by name, Capcom's Strider 2. Its point was that reviewers shouldn't complain that a game is too easy if they have to use the "continues," and that whenever a reviewer in another magazine complains that a game is too easy, they "probably suck." The editor also went on about how today's gamers were not cut from the same cloth as yesteryear, considering himself "old school" for being around in the days of Mario and Ryu, and praising readers who were there for the launch of the Genesis and SNES.

Since I reviewed Strider 2 and also complained that the infinite continues made the game easy to beat in a short time, I believe that the editorial was also addressed to me. So, I'm going to respond.

First of all, are we supposed to be impressed that the editor has been playing games since 1990? What about the 15 years of videogames before that time? Although you don't need to have owned or played games on an Odyssey 2, Atari 2600, or Intellivision to be a game reviewer, you shouldn't brag about your extensive background if you haven't.

Now, about Strider 2; The designers could have restricted the number of continues or given players a set number of lives, but they didn't. The game therefore should have been reviewed taking their decision into account. Abe's Oddworld, for example, has unlimited lives, but that doesn't mean the game can be beat in an hour or two. Strider 2 is based on an arcade game, and therefore emulates the ability to drop more coins in at any time to continue playing. This is intended to make up for the fact that the game throws a lot of enemies at you, as an arcade game would, in order to keep those quarters coming. Instead of chiding the developer for this shortcoming, the editor instead berates the critics. Apparently, players should not use unlimited continues and should reset the game every time they lose three lives. But that isn't the way the game was designed! In my opinion, if players have to put artificial restrictions on a game to make it more difficult, then the game is too easy. I think it is perfectly valid for a reviewer to complain about a game's difficulty (or lack thereof). This editor says that reviewers who do so must "suck," ignoring the fact that one of his own reviewers writes in that same issue: "I'm all for hard games because I think games are too easy these days..." How hypocritical can you get?

Rather than publishing more self-righteous diatribes, perhaps this magazine's editor ought to answer this question; How can you review three games (Breakout, Frogger 2, and Galaga) as final, criticizing them severely for their flaws, when they are still in the Beta stage? That, my friends, is what truly sucks.

Mark Androvich

Dear PSE2,

I have two questions for you. The first one is; I was wondering if the PS2 will be able to put out DVD in Dolby Digital Surround Sound? Or, will it be just in regular stereo sound? The second question is; Will the PS2 have a remote control to access the menus of DVD movies? Or, will it just have a button on the console to do this? Or, will it not be able to get to the menu screen at all? I want to be able to get all the special features of DVD movies on my PS2. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,
Paddy G

The PS2 will, indeed, output both DTS and Dolby Digital Surround for DVDs. It will not, however, have a remote control for DVDs. Fear not, young Paddy G, for there will be a huge number of remote controls available from 3rd parties at launch. You will be able to access all the special features of your DVD movies.

Dear PSE2,

I enjoy reading your magazine every month and you guys definitely have the best PlayStation mag, or should I say PlayStation2 mag. I reserved my PlayStation2 a few weeks ago and I can't wait until Oct. 26, when it hits stores. I have a few ?'s and hopefully you can answer them for me.

1). Will my PlayStation multi-tap work on PlayStation2, or will I have to get the PlayStation2 multi-tap?
2). Will PlayStation2 have Greatest Hits for all the best games and, if so, will they cost $20.00?
3). Does Madden 2001 (PS2) have bad controls ,because that's what I read on Electronic Boutique's web site (www.ebworld.com) under customer previews?
4). Last, but not least, does GT2000 have the same weird handling as Gran Turismo and Gran Turismo 2?

Thanks a lot,
Ben Keller

1. No, sorry. You'll have to buy a new one.
2. The Greatest Hits for PS1 will work on PS2. The price will remain the same. In order to become a Greatest Hits game, the game has to have sold over 250,000 units and be a year old. As soon as any PS2 games meet those criteria, they will become Greatest Hits.
3. The controls are perfect. How can any customers have reviewed it when it hadn't been released at the time you wrote us about it?
4. The handling in all the GT titles will be the same. Whether or not that's weird is up to you.

Dear PSE2,

What's up! My name is Omar and I live in New York. I'm really a good game player and I just had a few questions about PS2. Your magazine caught my eye in the September issue of PSExtreme that was really cool. I was looking forward to the games "Megaman Legends 2" and the ULTIMATE games (which I think are the best): "Resident Evil: Survivor" and "Final Fantasy 9." Anyway, I'm wondering; Do you need a New Memory Card for the PlayStation2 or can you use the old ones? If you can use the same controllers, will the "Resident Evil: Survivor" game have a gun with it, or do you need to get one? And, will "Final Fantasy 9" be the last FF game? I heard that the Resident Evil, Tomb Raider, and Parasite Eve "MOVIES" will be coming soon?

Thanks 4 the time
Omar C.
New York (The BRONX)

P.S. My family says 'hello' and, in the September issue, a kid named ADAM LOOMIS wrote that stupid comment that FF8 was better than FF7 because they weren't cartoons, they were people. Adam, FF7 was better, ok? So get your facts straight.
P.P.S. Sorry again, but I hope these questions come out the next issue of PSE2 PLEASE! I want to be known. THANKS! =)

PS1 memory cards will work on the PS2, but only for PS1 games. You won't be able to save a PS2 game on a PS1 memory card. PS1 controllers work fine for both PS1 and PS2 games, but the PS1 controllers don't have analog buttons like the ones the PS2 comes with. The U.S. version of RE: Survivor will not work with a light gun like the Japanese version. If you want to experience the thrill of blowing away the undead with a gun in your hand, you'll have to buy the import version.

Dear PSE2,

This is my first time writing to your mag. I've spent most of my years with Nintendo consoles and they have been good and still hanging on in popularity. But now its time for me to change to a new system, the PS2 (which i pre-ordered). I have played most of the RE series and I consider them awesome. But one thing, will this new RE for PS2 be worth it? Will it be totally different and a much better game than the others? Many gamers are asking those questions and want to know. I have read your mag and I consider it really good. Its one of the best magazines for PlayStation 1&2, but what's up with that Mark dude? He seems to very much dislike RPGs. I think they're awesome. Well, you have done a great job on your magazine and keep up the good work. Is it possible for an E3 convention to be held here in Miami and Sony visiting, too? I'm just curious . I wish that could happen but... whatever.

Thanks,
Jonathan

An RE title for the PS2 is a long way off. Capcom has been keeping all info about the title under tight security, but our sources tell us they're making great progress on the game. No E3 or Sony visits for FL are in the works, sorry. You'll have to save up and make the trip out to one yourself. It's worth it, trust us.

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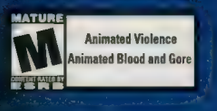

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FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

News Editor: **Dave Winding**

THE HILL IS STILL DEAD, WITH THE SOUND OF MUCOUS!

According to a number of on-line reports, Konami's follow-up to their entry in the "Survival Horror" genre, Silent Hill, will be displayed for the first time at the Tokyo Game Show. Of course, the big news is that Silent Hill 2 will be a PS2 title. We will have a full report from the TGS in our next edition, when we hope to give you a few screens and some more information on this hotly-anticipated title.

WE DON'T EVEN HAVE THE FIRST ONE YET, AND THE SECOND ONE IS COMING!

Take-Two Interactive announced at ECTS that they will be releasing a sequel to their much-anticipated racing game, Midnight Club, as early as next year. The game, tentatively entitled "Midnight Club: SR", will be developed by Angel Studios, the folks behind "Midtown Madness", "Smuggler's Run" and Midnight Club. The funny thing is, we haven't even played a close-to-finished copy of the first game! Talk about confidence; The franchise is already in year two and the first one is still a twinkle in the eye! Oops... this just in! Yes, we did receive a 95% complete version of Midnight Club, just as we were going to press. We will have the review for you next month, but we can tell you that the game took a major leap forward in this latest iteration. While it may not end up being the wonder that is Smuggler's Run, Take-Two/Rockstar certainly seem to have the makings of a franchise.

UBISOFT IS ALL OVER PS2!

As if you couldn't tell from previous items that we have run on Ubi Soft and their commitment to PS2, the company recently released a list of 10 of the 16 PS2 titles that the company expects to ship over the next year.

- Rayman Revolution (launch)
- F1 Racing Championship (launch)
- Disney's Dinosaur (mid-December)
- Donald Duck Quack Attack (mid-December)
- Jungle Book Groove Party (mid-December)
- Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles (spring 2001)
- Stupid Invaders (spring 2001)
- Peacemakers (RTS war-game)
- The next Rayman game
- A sequel to Speed Devils (Dreamcast/PC racing game)

We have yet to see any of these games in a playable form, so the idea that the first two titles are going to be available on October 26 seems a bit of a stretch this late in the game. But, it is likely that they will ship before the end of the year.

MAYBE 'FINAL' ISN'T QUITE THE RIGHT WORD.

Square EA has announced that "Final Fantasy IX" will make its American debut in November. As you all know, the title made big news in Japan this Summer when its pre-sell reached over a million units in just 17 days and has sold almost three million units to date. Of course, things won't be so intense in the US, but the game's release is still cause for celebration at retail. In support of the US release, Square EA will hold a "Consumer Demo Day" on Oct. 7, at the Metreon's PlayStation store in San Francisco. The one-day event will give consumers a chance to demo FFIX before it hits stores. Just a thought; Has anybody noticed that it took Square 10 years to do the first four FF's, and only four to release the next three? That's a lot of finality in a short period of time!

TRST TOP SELLING TITLES

AUGUST 27th - SEPTEMBER 2nd, 2000

1. EA's Madden NFL 2001 — last month 1, average retail price $41
2. Square's Chrono Cross — last month 2, average retail price $42
3. Sony's Gran Turismo 2 — last month 3, average retail price $27
4. Activision's Spider-Man — last month 10, average retail price $42
5. Activision's Tony Hawk Pro Skater — last month 3, average retail price $35
6. Take 2's Spec Ops — last month 4, average retail price $10
7. 989 Studios NFL GameDay 2001 — last month 5, average retail price $41
8. GT Interactive's Driver — last month 6, average retail price $23
9. THQ's WWF Smackdown — last month 7, average retail price $40
10. Sony's Crash Team Racing — last month **, average retail price $24

** Not in Top 10 Last Month. The ratings reflected above are those of Dimension Publishing and do not represent the opinions of NPD TRSTS.
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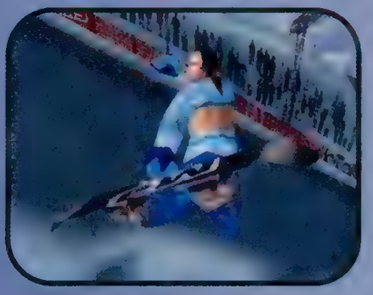

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PlayStation

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PlayStation

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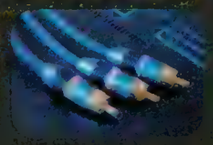

Each month, we'll pick out a code sent in by our loyal and intelligent readers and send that person a whole bunch of really cool stuff from MonsterCable! If you're the lucky winner, you'll get their excellent GameLink 200 AV Cable featuring nitrogen gas-injected dielectric insulator delivering maximum video signal strength for the clearest, sharpest picture possible, and the GameLink 300 S-Video AV Cable for even sharper, more crisp video then the standard composite cable, and the LightWave 100 Fiber Optic to take advantage of the PlayStation 2's Dolby Digital and DTS capabilities and lastly, the PowerStation 600 with 700 joules of surge protection to protect your baby! Wow! Those are some awesome prizes you can win for just sending in codes!

WE HAVE A WINNER!

This month's lucky winner is Mark Johnson from Newark, NJ. Congrats!

GameDay 2001

Bonus teams

Enter this code at the team selection screen. Press ○ for the Super Bowl teams. Press ○, ○ at the team selection screen for the All-Star teams.

Cheat Codes

Go to the options screen and choose the Easter Eggs option. Then enter any of the cheats from below.

All Bobo teams	Players have more endurance	POP WARNER
ALL BOBO	ENDURANCE	Cycle through cheerleaders after game
All players have equal abilities	Players named after U.S. presidents	FASHION SHOW
ALL EVEN	OVAL OFFICE	Frame by frame movement
Super speed bursts	Players named after basketball stars	STROBE LIGHT
ROCKET MAN	BASKETBALL	More injuries
Harder and longer passes	Players named after European league stars	HAM INJURY
SHOOTERS	EURO LEAGUE	Expert mode
Receivers catch better	Players named after programmers	SMARTER CPU
STICKEM	RED ZONE	Tiny players
Better running back	989 Studios players	FLEA CIRCUS
SUPER FOOT	989SPORTS	Large players
Better defensive line	Faster players	GIANTS
LINE BUSTER	BOOSTER	Large football
Harder tackles	Small, fast players	BIG PIG
CRUNCH		Flat players
More hits		TWO D
JACKHAMMER		

CONTEST RULES: Anyone of any age can enter. The only people not eligible to win are employees of Dimension Publishing or Monster Cable, their friends, family, pets and anyone they talk to or know of. Dimension Publishing reserves the right to make any and all decisions regarding the contest. One winner per month will be chosen, at Dimension Publishing's discretion, based on the code or trick supplied by the entrant.

Tekken Tag

Stage select in practice mode.

Go to the main menu, highlight Practice Mode, then press and hold L2 and then press R2 the total numbers of times indicated below.

Law new: Press R2 1 time.
Yoshimitsu light snow: Press R2 2 times.
Ling: Press R2 3 times.
Hwoarang: Press R2 4 times.
Lei: Press R2 5 times.
Ogre: Press R2 6 times.
School Stage evening: Press R2 7 times
Jin evening: press R2 8 times.
Nina daytime: press R2 9 times.
Eddy sunset: press R2 10 times.
King: press R2 11 times.
Heihachi: press R2 12 times.
Eddy daytime: Press R2 13 times.
Unknown level: Press R2 14 times.
Law old: press R2 15 times.
School Stage daytime: press R2 16 times.
Jin daytime: press R2 17 times.
Nina nighttime: press R2 18 times.
Yoshimitsu heavy snow: press R2 19 times.
Paul: press R2 20 times.

Action Bass

Bonus levels

Complete the challenge mode to unlock two more levels.

Larger fish

Pause the game, then press and hold Select then press L2, R2, R1, ↑.

Bonus lures

You will get a new lure for each level in challenge mode that is completed.

Spider-Man

Invincibility

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter RUSTCRST.

Infinite webbing

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter STRUDL.

Level select

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter XCLSIOR.

All comic books

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter ALLSIXCC.

All characters in gallery

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter CVIEW EM.

Joel James Jewett

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter RULUR.

Storyboard viewer

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter CGOSSETT.

All movies

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter WATCH EM.

What If Contest? mode

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter GBHSRSPM.

Big head mode

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter DULUX.

Debug mode

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter LLADNEK.

Unlock everything

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter EEL NATS.

Symbiote Spidey costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter BLKSPIDR.

Spidey 2099 costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter TWNTYNDN.

Captain Universe costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter S COSMIC.

Spidey Unlimited costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter PARALLEL. Press L2 to activiate Stealth Mode.

Scarlet Spider costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter LETTER S.

Amazing Bagman costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter AMZBGMAN.

Peter Parker costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter MJS STUD.

Ben Reilly costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter BNREILLY.

Quick Change Spidey costume

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter ALMSTPKR.

Full health

From the main menu select the Special option, then choose the Cheats option. Enter DCSTUR.

Tenchu 2

Restore health

Pause the game, then press and hold □ then press ←, →, ↑, ↓.

All Ninja items

Go to the item selection screen, press □, □, □, ○, □, ○, ○, ←, ↑, ↓, →, R2, R2.

Level select

Go to the level selection screen, press and hold Select + □ + ○ then press →, →, →, ↑, ←, ↓, R2.

Increase items by one

Go to the item selection screen, press and hold R1 + □ then press →, ↓, ←, ↑.

@Full map

While playing a game, press and hold Select to display the map, then press ○, ○, ○, ○, ○.

All missions in mission editor

In the mission editor screen enter the custom mission screen. then press and hold R2 + ○ then press ↑, ↓, ↓, →, ←, ←.

Game levels in mission editor

In the mission editor screen enter the mission settings screen, then press and hold ○ then press ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →.

Office tileset in mission editor

In the mission editor screen enter the mission settings screen, then highlight the New Mission option. Press and hold L2 then press ○, □, ←, →, ○, □. You will hear a sound if entered correctly.

Tatsumaru in mission editor

Go to the level selection screen, press and hold □ + ○ then press R1, R2, L2, L1, ↑, ↓, ←, →, Select. Then you have to successfully complete the game with both Rikimaru and Ayame.

Submit Codes

Send all codes to:
Dimension Publishing
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Foster City, CA 94404
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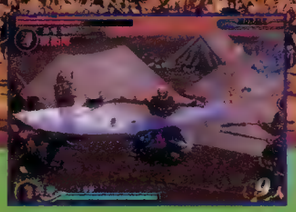

TEEN T Animated Violence
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PERIPHERALS

These days, there are plenty of cool-looking controllers on the market, some of which are targeted at a particular genre of games. These unique devices would seem to hold tremendous appeal, since they try to further blur the lines between gaming and reality by introducing a new level of interactivity. We've already reviewed a number of PlayStation racing wheels that put you in the driver's seat — but that was just the tip of the iceberg. This month, we review two more unique control interfaces that can breath new life into some of your favorite games, as well as a different gamepad for your consideration.

FreeStyler Board

Manufacturer: Thrustmaster
MSRP: $69.99

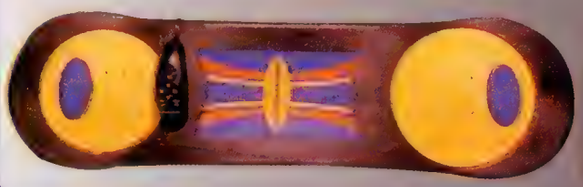
If our ratings were given out on looks alone, this super-cool controller would have no trouble at all scoring a Gold X or better. However, when it comes to practicality and playability, the FreeStyler Board loses some points and comes precariously close to being a case of form exceeding function.

First, the good stuff. The board is big, heavy and solidly made, with its considerable bulk inspiring confidence in its durability. That's a pretty good thing, considering the price tag. The FreeStyler is more like a snowboard than a skateboard in size, but it works fine with both kind of games, and also is designed to work with the PS2. We tested it with Grind Session, Tony Hawk, MTV Sports: Snowboarding, Cool Boarders 3 and Surf Riders, and only the last game gave us any compatibility problems.

The best thing about the board is that it definitely adds an extra element of realism and fun, since you feel more like a boarder than you would if you were plopped in the family room recliner. Its tilt-sensor steering lets you turn left and right, but often this is difficult to do with precision. Balance is definitely a factor, just like it is in real life, but it would have been nice if the steering was a little more user-friendly. Moving in a straight line is even more of a challenge, since your every movement on the board is quickly translated onscreen.

There are two large, blue action buttons on the deck of the board, as well as a hand-held controller that you use for doing jumps, busting tricks and surfing through menus. The hand-held unit is pretty small, so it's easy to make faulty button-presses, and the cord that attaches it to the board sometimes gets in the way. Fortunately, Thrustmaster had the foresight to include a slot on the board where you can plug in your original PlayStation controller, which many players may opt to do.

In the end, the FreeStyler Board is a great idea that simply needs some fine-tuning — but it's still the only game in town for PlayStation and PS2 owners who want to ride in style.



Beat Pad

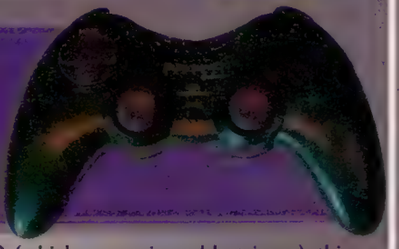
Manufacturer: Mad Catz
MSRP: $24.99

We tested the Beat Pad with both Bust-A-Groove games — as well as some of our favorite fighters — and found that it functioned admirably with all of these. In fact, the controller was just good enough to squeak into our Gold category, despite a few flaws. These problems included the pad's tendency to move around a bit under intense usage on carpeted surfaces, as well as the relatively small "dead zone" in the center of the mat. It would have been nice to give adult players a few more inches on which to stand without accidentally triggering arrows or buttons. There's also a bit of a learning curve involved, because you have to get used to where the buttons are placed, so you can keep your attention focused on the TV.

However, these issues notwithstanding, there's also a lot to like about the Beat Pad. For one thing, it is incredibly fun to out-dance (or beat the snot out of) the competition while you're standing up, using your feet. It also adds a whole new level of action and interactivity to the proceedings, and is a much better way to burn off calories than simply plopping in front of the tube. Balance is also a factor, especially when the action speeds up and your footwork has to keep pace. Some players may need something to hang onto, just in case, but many will enjoy the additional physical challenge.

Dual Impact Color

Manufacturer: Interact
MSRP: $19.99



Like it's new sibling the Dual Impact 2 (which we reviewed last issue), this gamepad features a comfortable contoured design that fits quite nicely in your hands. The two controllers also share a similar layout, although the start and select buttons aren't quite as prominent on the Dual Impact Color as they are on the Dual Impact 2.

The D-pad is also a different circular design on the Dual Impact Color, but it is still pretty fluid and user-friendly. The shoulder buttons are nicely angled like they are on the Dual Impact 2, and the analog sticks are just as comfortable and responsive. However, one thing we'd like to see improved is the way the thumb pads are attached to the sticks, because after a while they do have a tendency to become loose and move around a little as you play.

As far as handling goes, the Dual Impact Color has some fairly smooth moves, although we still liked the Dual Impact 2 just a little bit better. The buttons are responsive, there are the three handling modes (digital, analog and steering wheel), and the vibration effects are also pretty decent.

The controller is available in four different colors, and its handsome, streamlined design will probably appeal to many players. All in all, the Dual Impact Color represents a good overall value that won't leave you feeling cheated. It's not the PlayStation's best controller, but it's certainly good enough to recommend.

(If you have questions about the products tested, or your company would like to submit products for review, send an e-mail to ubergamer@aol.com)

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SMUGGLER'S RUN

It happens every time we move on to the next generation of gaming hardware — a software publisher that was on the outside, looking in, in the previous hardware generation, establishes itself as a player on the new system. In 2000, and with PS2, that would be Rockstar. As you will find out in this Cover Story feature, not only do they have Oni and Midnight Club coming before the end of the year, but they have the best off-road experience you've ever had ready for launch, "Smuggler's Run".

Smuggler's Run offers three modes of play: Smuggler's Mission (the mission-based, one player game), where you compete to become a top dog in the very dangerous, dark and illicit world of international smuggling, in a series of missions; Turf War, which is instant action where you jump right in to either Crooks N' Smugglers, Loot Grab, or Checkpoint game modes, in any of the game's three different environments (this is also the center of the two player, split-screen universe) and; Joyridin', where you pick a car, pick a level, then buckle up for a go-anywhere thrill ride.

Choosing Smuggler's Mission gets you in to the meat and potatoes of the one player game. Similar in concept to "Driver" on PS1, you begin by going through a short initiation, where you can choose to drive one of two different vehicles: a Buggy and an SUV. This initial race gives you 2:00 minutes to reach seven checkpoints. As long as you follow the giant green arrow at the top of the screen and don't get tragically stuck behind some large rock or building, you will make it through OK. At the end, you are awarded bonus money for any extra ticks left on the clock and are given an overall ranking. Of course, you also lose money for any damage that occurs to your vehicle (you've got to pay to fix it). Then, you are given your first real mission — a couple of "packages" that need to be delivered for the boss. In this mission, there are no cops to worry about. Once you beat it, then the real fun begins and things start to get crazy. Because, once the cops get involved, they will try anything to disable your vehicle (there is a damage meter in the lower-left corner of the screen that you need to keep in the green). If they turn you over and converge, you will be busted. The meter will go back up with time, assuming you can stay clear of the fuzz.

As you move through the missions, you will start to get a little variety. The 5th mission is a race against five rivals from the world of contraband pickup and delivery (the O'Grady's). You must beat them through a series of checkpoints (and the cops — who are not at all happy about this little competition!) and finish first to move on to the next mission.

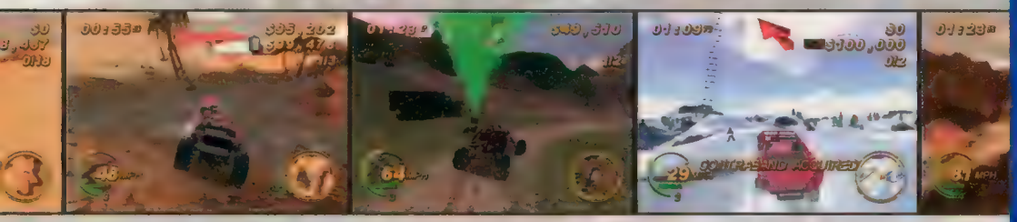
The first 10 missions or so occur in a mountainous area filled with trees, rivers, bridges and railroad tracks. Once you finish this set, then its on to a new area. You will be rewarded with additonal vehicles as you enter the new areas.

The gameplay is absolutely intense! Cops are on your tail constantly, and it always seems like there are more joining the party all of the time. They are on your bumper, driving straight at you, trying to cut you off, setting up road blocks to stop you and even jumping over the top of your vehicle in order to stop your illegal activities. Best of all, there is no set pattern to the PS2-controlled vehicles' behavior. Every time you make a new attempt at a level, they will come at you from different angles. In addition, the physics model for the game's vehicles and the way they react on hills, side-hills and changes of terrain can actually be seen and felt in gameplay. The one thing that almost guarantees failure in Smuggler's Run is rolling your vehicle. The game is so accurate that it accounts for all four wheels and their relative positions on the driving surface. Hit too high on the front end and you will go head over heels. Land on a side-hill, traveling a bit too fast, and you will roll. In addition, because of all the gameplay variations and the subtle changes in the environments as you move through the missions in a particular area, it NEVER gets boring. Of course, if the one player game ceases to be a challenge, there is always some split-screen action between you and a buddy.

Graphically, the first thing that impresses about the go-anywhere 3D engine is the line of sight and the impressive frame rate. You can see for what seems to be (in scale) miles. The only down side to this is that the Level of Detail (LOD) system employed by the development team at Angel Studios is a little rough and you can see textures on hills, train tracks, etc. magically transform a little ways in front of you. But, this is a relatively minor complaint when you see the variety of objects and small details to be found in each of the game's three environments: Mountain, Desert and Snow. There are many trees, signs, fences, boulders, etc. that can be smashed or knocked around within the environments and the changes in elevation have to be driven to be believed — a very impressive display.

The music and voice in Smuggler's Run are relatively low key, letting the action do the talking. The voice is VERY limited and you will find your dispatcher giving you the same useless information, over and over again.

That being said, the physics, terrain and edge of your seat gameplay are enough to make Smuggler's Run one of the top PS2 launch titles. It may lack the polish of a Ridge Racer V, but the gameplay experience more than makes up for it. Make sure you pick this one up when you buy the hardware.



Genre	Racing
Publisher	Rockstar
Developer	Angel Studios
Origin	USA
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Release Date	October 26

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

SCORE: 98%

BOTTOM LINE

Smuggler's Run is an intense, white-knuckle racing game that brings back the best memories of the "Road Rash" series. Its huge environments, coupled with excellent speed, great physics and control and impressive graphics make it one of the "must-buy" launch games. Rockstar and Angel Studios have announced their presence with authority on PS2.

PSE2 EDITOR'S CHOICE PLATINUM

A WORD WITH THE CREATORS...

Angel STUDIOS

ROCKSTAR

PSE2: Angel Studios is well known on the PC side of gaming, but seems to be a relative newcomer on the console side. Can you give us a brief pedigree of the company's work and history?

Angel: In the late '80s and early '90s, Angel Studios pioneered software technology that used physics and other dynamic approaches to generate visual simulations for award-winning films like Lawnmower Man and music videos like Mindblender. During this period, Angel worked closely with systems manufacturer Silicon Graphics, who was developing the architecture for the then-new Nintendo 64 console. Silicon Graphics recommend Angel Studios to Nintendo, since Nintendo needed Angel's pioneering skills in 3D visual simulation. At the time, Angel's innovative technology was too advanced to run efficiently in the real-time environment. Computers were getting faster, however. When Nintendo asked Angel to join the prestigious "Dream Team" in the '90s, Angel realized the potential and focused its R&D efforts on optimizing its technology for the Nintendo 64 and other consumer hardware of that era. Some of our early work in games includes, Ecco: Tides of Time (Saturn), and Mr. Bones (Sega), and later work includes Ken Griffey Jr. Baseball (N64), Ken Griffey, Jr.'s Slugfest N64), and Resident Evil II (N64). So, in a sense, Angel Studios actually cut its teeth as a games developer on consoles.

PSE2: How did the concept and idea for Smuggler's Run come about? Were there things in the original design document that had to be left out due to time and technology constraints?

A: The core concept for Smuggler's Run was an evolutionary one, with the creative elements taking on solid form based on the entire team's input. With the genesis of the recipe being something like; Start with incredibly huge and mind-blowing open, go-anywhere (literally) landscapes. Add in a pinch of cops and robbers, and then expand greatly upon that concept. Figure out how to accurately model wild off road vehicles. Dowse liberally with extreme fun. Sprinkle in some of the legendary Rockstar "Bad Boy" element. Shake lightly (but don't stir), and there you go. Smuggler's Run is chalk full of excitement and wicked fun. From a technology point of view, we were able leverage some of our core physics, vehicle and rendering technologies. Of course, this only got us started. Then, each time we hit technical problems, we simply created new technologies to allow us to do what we wanted to do, and not what everyone else was saying could be done. Lastly, in terms of what got left out, there were a few things. But we think we'll keep those under wraps for now.

AF

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Screen shots taken from Playstation 2

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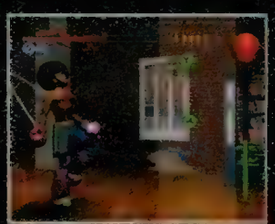
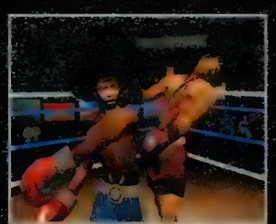
READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING ROUND 2

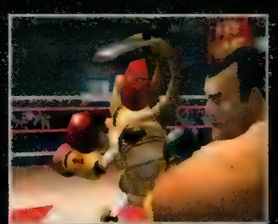


Train with Mini Games

New Ring-Clearing Rumble Flurries



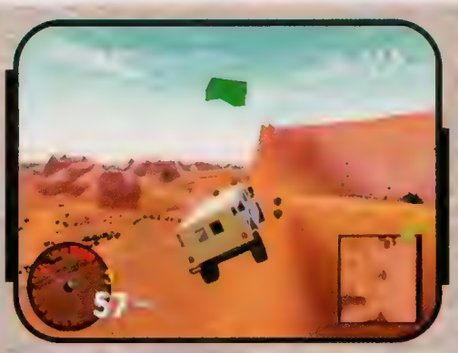
New Taunts, Combos and Animations



23 Outrageous Boxing Personalities

Sharper Single Player Boxing

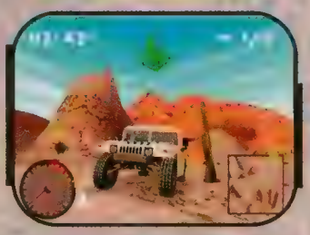
TEST DRIVE OFF-ROAD WIDE OPEN

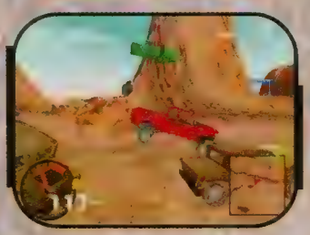


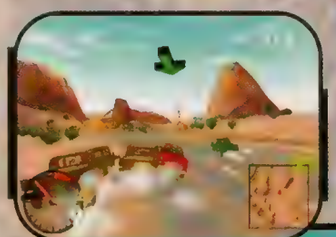
Genre Driving
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Angel Studios
Release Date Summer, 01

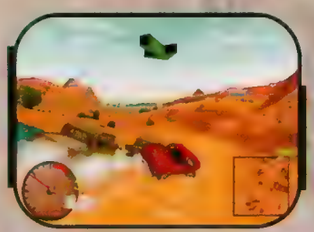
Infogrames/Accolade's Test Drive Off-Road series has had its share of ups and downs since its PlayStation inception back in '97. The first of three to date (excluding the PS2 version on the way) was an unexpected success and headed straight for the Greatest Hits program early on. While the game's graphics were ho-hum, the allure of being able to drive a virtual Hummer was just too great, and thus the game sold very well. The original off-road also gave players a greater freedom than the following two, as the tracks were much more open and only limited to the barriers placed to keep you from getting too far off the beaten path. The second in the series was a variation of the Test Drive 4 engine (which was created by UK developers, Pitbull) and kept players on a track. While the tracks were definitely off-road, the game felt like a quick and dirty port and didn't offer much in the way of variety, gameplay or off-road physics. The third in the series tried to rectify this, with an all-new internal team and a new graphic engine. The look of the game was amazing, the physics were definitely tweaked and improved, and the tracks, while still limited, were much more wide open and unrestricted. Unfortunately, all of this was at a cost, and the game itself was plagued with terrible slowdown and funky control (you had to "pump" the "gas pedal" when tackling steep terrain if you didn't want to slide back down, resulting in an exercise in frustration).

Not letting themselves get discouraged, and wanting to keep this lucrative franchise alive, Infogrames has turned to Angel Studios (developers of both Smuggler's Run and Midnight Club for the PS2) to re-invent the genre for Sony's next-generation super console. With Test Drive off-road: Wide Open, the idea of off-road racing on tracks is a thing of the past. Thanks to the PS2's polygon-pushing power (and Angel Studios tech-savvy know-how), races are now only limited to the developers' imaginations and the environments from which they are inspired by. Similar in design to Smuggler's Run, the environments on which you're racing are completely wide open (hence the title) and you can make your own path. In order to keep you somewhat on the path and in the race, you will be given a set of checkpoint markers you must drive by or through. There are laps with starting and finishing lines, but it's going to be up to you to find the shortest line to victory. The environments can and will have multiple "tracks" within them (up to ten each), spanning many square miles with no shared track sections. Speaking of environments, there will be three to race across — Moab (Utah), Yosemite (California) and the Big Island (Hawaii) — each chosen for their diversity in textures and locales, while maintaining the look and feel of extreme off-road racing.





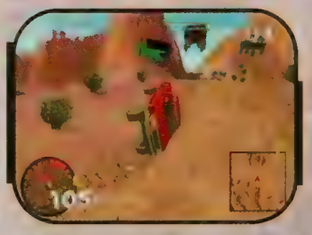




Wide Open will have a variety of features and options, some standard and some adding new elements to the genre. Of course, there will be a host of current licensed off-road vehicles, such as the AM General Hummer and Humvee, Jeep Wrangler, Ford F150, Dodge RAM 2500, Shelby Durango, etc.), but each will be completely customizable with packages that you can purchase with your winnings. A new addition is the inclusion of a real-time radio. Players will be able to choose their racing music just like they would in real life. There will be a variety of radio stations to scan through, each with their own brand and style of music announced by a DJ. Sounds pretty cool! Here are a few more features I've left out: both lap and A-to-B courses with locations varying in size and animals roaming in the environment, three distinct outdoor locations, as well as an indoor off-road stadium. Incredible off-road physics that are balanced between real life and arcade fun, and upgrades (which include paint jobs, tires, wheels, suspension, lift kits and more) that will not only produce a difference on the track, but a visual change in appearance on-screen as well.

With a whopping eight months of development time still in hand, Angel Studios is well on their way to creating an amazing looking and incredibly fun-playing racing game. Our thanks to Infogrames' Mika Kelly and the Team at Angel Studios for taking the time and effort to give us an exclusive look at this promising PS2 game.

greg



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

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MOTO GP

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Unreal TOURNAMENT

Genre FPS
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Epic
Release Date Fall, 00

Hot on the heels of its major success on the PC, Unreal Tournament, the multiplayer first person shooter frag-fest, is making its way to the PlayStation2 as early as this November. For those of you who haven't partaken of the intense multiplayer melees the PC title offers, the goal of the game is to become the Unreal Grand Master (which, in basic terms, means having the most kills) by testing your skills against, or fighting alongside, other players and/or AI controlled "bots".

Unreal's award-winning multiplayer action has been preserved from the PC game and the PS2 version includes deathmatch and team-oriented modes of play, as well as an enhanced version of its critically acclaimed "Botmatch" (which allows players to compete against extremely lifelike computer-controlled enemies in deathmatch play). In addition, the game's advanced artificial intelligence allows players to lead a squad of computer-controlled allies against teams of human or computer-controlled enemies, taking the team-oriented gameplay experience to heights never before achieved on a home console.

One of the coolest things worth mentioning is the multiplayer capabilities of the game for the PlayStation2 version. Sure, there is the ability to play against up to four other players via a four player split screen — any PS2 fps worth its salt better have this option. But, since Sony has not introduced its modem or online strategy at the moment, you would think that developers would be pigeonholed into leaving any kind of network solution out of the first generation games until it becomes more feasible. Not Epic, they have included the ability to play against several friends by linking many PS2's together via firewire (think LAN). While it's similar in concept to Sony's earlier failed attempt with the PlayStation link-up cable, it is a very cool option to include if you have either a friend with a PS2 who can play on another TV set or, even better yet, a video game publishing office with multiple PS2s and plenty of monitors with which to play them on.

Here's the shortlist of features found in the PS2 version of the game: Redesigned Deathmatch levels — fragging gets extreme with over 50 maps of destruction, some are identical to the PC version, some have been redesigned specifically for the PS2, and some are brand new. Four Game Modes — Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Domination and Assault; A large arsenal of weapons — ten to be exact, including the Pulse Blaster, Impact Hammer and, everybody's perennial favorite, the Rocket Launcher; Advanced Bot AI — stemming from the original Unreal Tournament, the advanced Bot AI results in improved level navigation, understanding of lifts, swimming, triggered doors and use of pick-up items, such as armor, shin pads and jump boots. In addition, Bots are more intelligent to help them determine which weapon is best for a specific situation, and have the ability to understand how to function on a team and take commands, such as "defend," "attack," "hold position," "take their flag" and "cover me"; Spectator Cams — cameras can be placed throughout any level to provide non-players with a front row seat to all of the action; Enhanced User Interface — new graphically and functionally enhanced menus, and specific HUDs have been added for each mode of play; Lastly (and most importantly, according to PC purists) is the enhanced control system — the game's controls have been modified to not only fit the DualShock2, but there is also USB keyboard and mouse support.

Unreal Tournament is scheduled for release sometime in November. We will have a hands-on report in next month's issue.

Greg

PlayStation 2

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EA SPORTS BIG SSX

Larry LaPierre, the Producer behind EA Sport's mind-blowing SSX title, took a few minutes out of his incredibly hectic schedule to lend some insight behind the development of this year's most radical snowboarding game. Here's what Larry had to say;

PSE2: Let's start with an easy one, what does "SSX" stand for, if anything?
Larry: SSX originally stood for "Snowboard Supercross," but we eventually dropped the full title because although it was descriptive, it was just too wordy and people kept getting it confused with about five other variations of the same set of words. We all liked just "SSX" so it stuck... it was short and easy to remember. We hope that "SSX" comes to stand for a benchmark arcade-style gaming experience that is easy to pick up and play, a challenge to master and impossible to put down. We are confident that people will have this type of addictive fun experience with it. We sure still do.

PSE2: Generally speaking, snowboarding-type games (i.e. extreme or alternative sports) don't show up in a platform's library until later in its lifespan — after all the mainstream sports have been covered. How has SSX been able to reach the market at or near the launch of the system?
LL: I think over the last few years we've witnessed the emergence and establishment of an "alternative sports" game genre, I think the timing just happens to have coincided with the life cycle of the maturing platforms and the introduction of the current next generation systems. I don't think it is directly related to the life cycle of the platforms, It is, however, indirectly related through the fact that developers and publishers will invest in titles for key system launches (like the PS2) that will sell the best. So, classically mainstream sports titles have always performed well and had a steady market demand. These days one could argue that some of the alternative sports games are as popular as the traditional sports titles. I guess we'll see how SSX holds up with the mainstream sports titles. With SSX, we knew we would need the power of the next generation systems in order to achieve the sense of control, speed and visceral impact that would truly stand out amongst the existing competition. We wanted to give people a unique, fun "arcade" focussed experience in the comfort of their own home. So, we targeted the next generation systems from the very beginning (over two years ago). We got the fastest PC's and 3D cards we could find and pushed them to their limits. Then, we upgraded them and did it again, until we got access to actual development systems from Sony. By setting such high benchmarks early on, we are now not only one of the key launch titles for EA, but we are also one of the only completely original titles to make launch from both a content perspective and technical perspective.

PSE2: From what we have seen and played, the tracks in SSX are HUGE, with many alternate paths and shortcuts. Was there an intentional focus on making the tracks bigger than anything previously seen for the purpose of showing off the hardware?
LL: It was very intentional, but I wouldn't say that the purpose was to show off the hardware. It was probably the other way around. The hardware gave us the ability to create the "worlds" in all the detail that we could dream up. It just so happens that these surpass any "track" you have played in a game before.

PSE2: Speaking of the tracks, tell us about the specific designs and where the inspiration for each course originated.
LL: The inspiration for the tracks started with asking ourselves one simple question "What if"... The only limitation we put upon ourselves is that of plausible reality, meaning that if we had enough money and resources could this really exist? Snowdream — Designed to be the first track you encounter, has softer terrain and easy transitions — probably the most "normal" track we designed. We wanted to build into the larger-than-life aspect of the other tracks. Elysium Alps — What if there was a track carved through some of the most extreme terrain in the French Alps? Mesablanca — What if there was a track in the desert that they had snowblowers making snow, over rocky terrain that had a bobsled run feel to it? Merqury City Meltdown — What if there was a city-based track in the middle of winter where they blocked off portions of the city to set up a course? Tokyo Megaplex — What if there was an indoor track that you did laps on by entering a huge glass tube at the bottom with fans that blew you back up to the top? Pipedream — We wanted pipedream to deliver the ultimate halfpipe/big air combination possible. Aloha Ice Jam — What if there was an iceberg in a tropical location? And, what if it was melting while you raced down it pulling off insane tricks and just barely making the landings? Untracked — Soul food for freeriding! Probably the best payoff for beating a game in some time.

PSE2: Tell us about the music in SSX — original material or licensed bands? Who?
LL: We have an awesome mix of both original tracks and licensed tunes. We had Mix Master Mike and Rahzel collaborate on an original tune as the title track called slayboarder... it kicks. Other artists include Rasmus, Skank, LHB, Politika, Aphrodite and Mickey Finn, as well as some original stuff by our own guys. One of the coolest aspects of the tunes is that they are remixed every time you play, as you play, and the mix intensity is tied to how well you are doing. It's subtle, but it's awesome!

PSE2: Is there anything else you would like our readers to know about SSX?
LL: Just enjoy it as much as we do. Oh, and tell two friends.

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PlayStation 2

Dropship

There are a number of games for PS2 that will ship sometime in 2001 as part of the 2nd generation of software. SCEE and Studio Camden's Dropship is one of the more interesting ones. Dropship will be an exhilarating, accessible and highly atmospheric action game, combining air-to-air and air-to-ground combat elements with real-time strategy influences. Players take the role of a rookie pilot who will be flying different types of advanced Dropships, each heavily armed and capable of different flight modes, in a variety of hazardous military operations. Incorporating three different game styles — space-to-ground, real-time strategy and flight simulation combat, Dropship presents the player with a completely immersive battle experience. Players can drop through the stratosphere, delivering their troops safely to the planet's surface, dispatch artillery and vehicles to key strategic positions, and interact with the troops directly in the battles that will unfold. Players will take part in an epic war that escalates and unfolds during the course of the game.

Genre Flight Combat
Publisher SCEA
Developer SCEE
Release Date March, 01

Motor Mayhem

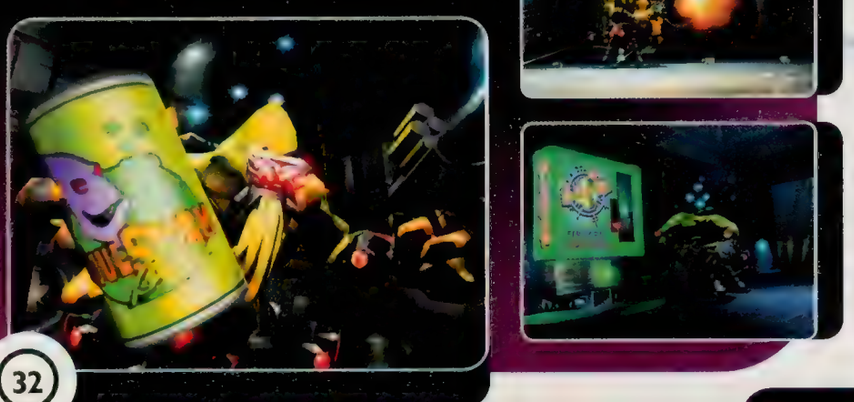
Capitalizing on the Vehicular Combat genre Twisted Metal single-handedly created back in '95, Infogrames' Motor Mayhem is set to deliver extreme destruction and killer competition among a cast of mean and nasty characters. What promises to make this game stick out is the emphasis placed on the characters themselves. In most car combat games, you don't get to see who's behind the wheel. With Motor Mayhem, you'll get a bird's eye view of each character and their incredible animations. Each of their personalities will be conveyed through facial expressions and their actions behind the wheel. When all is said and done, the amount of detail promises to be astounding. The game will take place over ten multi-level arenas that are located across a variety of earth-based environments. Each vehicle is equipped with a host of standard weapons (cannons, lasers, etc), in addition to power-ups and special items that are strewn about each level. Characters also have their own signature moves and power-ups.

Genre Car Combat
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Beyond Games
Release Date March, 01

Munch's Oddysee

A lot of people will be disappointed that this game is not going to make it to retail this year but, in the case of Munch's Oddysee, time should be on their side. This game is epic in scope and, for anyone who has played the first two games on the PS1, you know it will be worth the wait. The 3D engine that the development team has employed in Munch's is without peer and the animation has to be seen to be believed. Then, there's the game's zany plot; How would you feel if you broke your leg in a bear trap, were abducted by soulless scientists, had an alien device implanted in your skull, and found out your race had been hunted to extinction? Meet Munch, hero of the most magnificent yet Oddest Oddysee of all. His luck is about to change — for the worse! Oddworld is back with its second chapter in the Oddworld quintology — Munch's Oddysee. As the guardian angel over Munch and his sometimes best friend Abe, it is up to you to help or hurt their self-sustaining biosphere and all their friends that live within it.

Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Oddworld
Release Date May, 01



Oni Musha

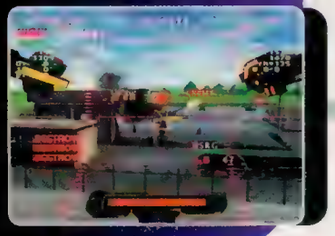
Thanks to the power of the PlayStation2, Capcom's next action/adventure project will rival the production of a major motion picture. The script for Onimusha: Warlords is being penned by Flagship, the same people responsible for Resident Evil, with an original musical score performed by a 200-piece orchestra. The game takes place in the year 1560, as the warlord Nobunaga Oda begins his takeover attempt to rule feudal Japan. During one battle, the sister of warlord Yoshitatsu Saito is kidnapped and a samurai warrior named Samanosuke volunteers to rescue her. The game mixes both actual Japanese historical accounts and fictional storylines to create a cinematic experience. Utilizing characters rendered with an average of 10,000 polygons each, Onimusha: Warlords will take full advantage of the PS2's emotion engine to create realistic animation. Capcom also promises an innovative special effects background technology that will bring the environments to life.

Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher Capcom
Developer Capcom
Release Date March, 01

GUN GRIFFON BLAZE

Game Arts' Gun Griffon Blaze promises to take gamers on an adrenaline-filled, white-knuckle ride into the apocalyptic future. In the game, you must pilot a huge mechanized war machine, equipped with the latest hi-tech weaponry, and complete six increasingly difficult missions in order to return peace to the world. Similar in concept to Agetec/From Software's Armored Core 2, Gun Griffon Blaze plays more like an action-packed arcade game (whereas Armored Core 2 is more of a simulation). Expect all-out madness, as enemies will be firing at you from every side, and you will have to manage your health, weapons and battle status if you are going to succeed. Gun Griffon features amazing, 60 frames per second gameplay, an incredible graphic engine complete with blazing explosions, crumbling buildings, and a very cool zoom feature, the ability to find and pickup weapons, health and items, and plenty of intense action. With both Silpheed and Gun Griffon Blaze, it looks like Working Designs' Spaz division is set to deliver at launch.

Genre Mech Shooter
Publisher Working Designs
Developer Game Arts
Release Date October, 00



STREET LETHAL

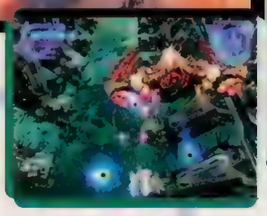
Although the original PlayStation saw more than its fair share of racing games, in the first five years no developer ever thought to create a contest featuring concept cars rather than using generic or licensed vehicles. Right off the bat, Activision will make sure that the PlayStation2 doesn't lack for such a game. Street Lethal, which is being developed by a team of ex-Square employees now known as Exakt, offers 12 licensed concept cars as well as a full-fledged car editor mode so that players can design their own vehicles. Races take place in ten different fully-interactive city environments located in Germany, Italy, France, the U.K. and the U.S. Expect to see the action unfold in Los Angeles, London, and Paris among others. The power of the PS2 will be utilized to ensure that the game zips a long at a decent pace — a planned rate of 60 frames per second. Not only will the game run fast, but the AI of the opponents will be quite advanced and the cars will suffer real-time damage and deformation which will affect their handling. A two-player mode, secret cars, locked tracks, and other hidden bonuses are sure to be a part of Street Lethal when it hits the shelves next Spring.

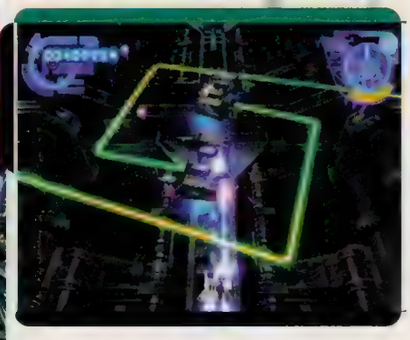
Genre Racing
Publisher Activision
Developer Activision
Release Date April, 01

SILPHEED

In Game Arts' Silpheed: The Lost Planet, a remake of the original polygon 3D Sega CD shooter, you will battle a host of parasitic monsters as they attempt to devour the remainder of the known universe, 31 years after the last civil war. In the game, you will pilot a top-secret, SA-77 Silpheed starship through six levels of intense play. Like most shooters, Silpheed retains the classic shooter play, although updated to take advantage of the PlayStation2's polygon-pushing capabilities. In the game, your point value at the end of each level will determine when new weapons of the nine possible will be awarded. Your ship can equip two weapons at a time, but you must choose very carefully, as certain bosses are more susceptible to particular weapons. Expect breathtaking environments, detailed enemies and magnificent explosions to light up the screen, while the Dualshock2's vibration will lend the game an adrenaline-creating realism. Fans of the original, gamers who remember what shooters were all about, and newcomers who are looking to show off their sleek new system will want to look out for SIlpheed at launch

Genre Shooter
Publisher Working Designs
Developer Game Arts
Release Date October, 00

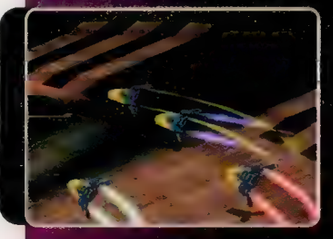


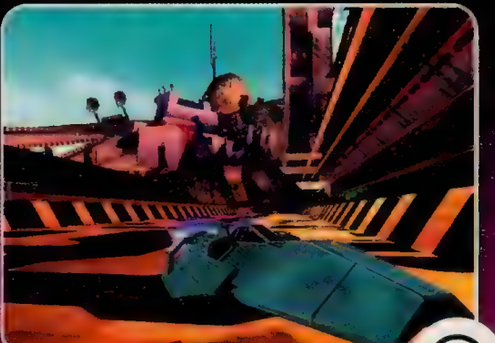


WIPEOUT FUSION

Psygnosis' Wipeout: Fusion was finally shown in playable form at this year's ECTS. From the 75% complete demo we saw, it's evident the game promises to take the series a massive step forward, not only with the new greater power of the PlayStation2, but with the addition of completely new gameplay features, tracks, ships, weapons and game modes. Some of the tracks shown included narrow city environments and wide-opened desert tracks, complete with loops. Each of the environments will have three tracks — easy, medium and hard — and will open up as you progress, similar in concept to the Ridge Racer series. Another new feature is the game's cash management system, where players will be rewarded cash for placement in a race, the amount of damage inflicted to the other racers and best lap times. You can then use your winnings to upgrade or buy vehicles, in order to keep up with the competition. The game is currently running at 60 fps, even with a total of 16 vehicles on the tack at once, but the version shown didn't have all of the special effects or weapons systems in place. The developers are confident they will be able to still achieve this when the game is finished.

Genre Racing
Publisher SCEA
Developer SCEE
Release Date December, 00





Wild Wild Racing

Interplay's Wild Wild Racing promises to strap you into a hard-core all-terrain vehicle and challenge you to take part in a variety of off-road races through some of the most challenging courses around the world. Developed by Rage (makers of Expendable and Incoming for the DC), WWR offers up a wide range of 4x4 vehicles, from sleek and small racing buggies to brute force, V8 -powered behemoths. The game features a sophisticated physics engine that ensures that the handling of each of each of these vehicles is closely tied in with their appearance. In addition, there are a ton of game modes and options to guarantee that there is plenty to see and do. There are a total of five locales to race through — USA, India, Iceland, Mexico and Australia — each of these areas offer a variety of courses, complete with hazards, varying weather conditions and plenty of shortcuts. There are also a vide variety of game modes, ranging from Championship, Challenge and Time Attack, and some cool, secret goodies to unlock. The game should be out in time for Christmas.

Genre Racing
Publisher Interplay
Developer Rage
Release Date December, 00

Sarge's Heroes 2

Get ready for the ultimate toy-war experience this Christmas, as 3DO's little plastic men are back and ready to do battle on the PlayStation2! Sarge and Bravo Company Commandos managed to foil the Tan Army's first assault, but do they have what it takes this time? The setting for the sequel to this expansive franchise has General Plastro teaming up with Brigitte Blue, a diabolically treacherous Blue Spy, to destroy the Green Nation once and for all. The adventure continues, next-generation-style, as Sarge and Vikki will have to fight their way over pool tables, under beds, inside pinball machines, and across desktops to the final showdown against Plastro and his troops. Some of the features in this upcoming title include both Vikki and Sarge missions, the ability to call-in airstrikes during the heat of battle, a total of 18 missions with a variety of objectives (search and destroy, rescue and defend, etc.), and tons of cool weapons (Assault Rifles, Bazookas, Flamethrowers, etc.).

Genre Action/Shooter
Publisher 3DO
Developer 3DO
Release Date December, 00

Metal Gear 2

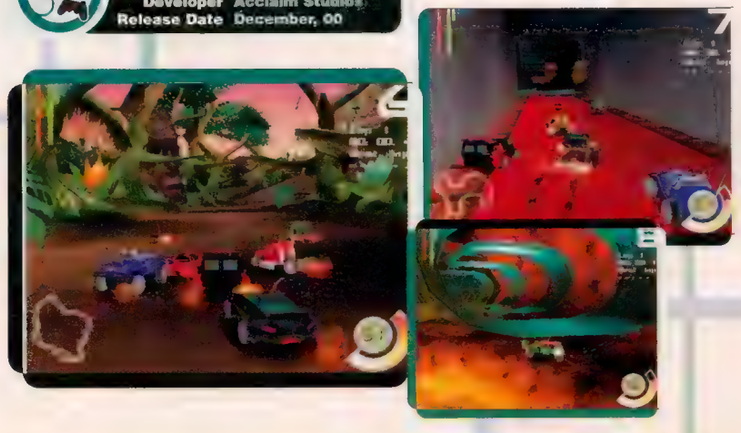
Konami graciously delivered a new trailer of Hideo Kojima's next masterpiece at ECTS. In addition to the trailer, a total of eight new screens have gone up on their English/Japanese dedicated Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty website (http://www.konami.co.jp/kcej/products/west/mgs2/index.html). While we still can't comment on gameplay, we can give a brief description of the latest trailer. This one begins with the Brooklyn Bridge in New York, seen from a bird's eye view. It's a rainy night and you can see the lights of cars streaming through the haze. The camera closes in on a solitary hooded person walking alongside the road. It's Solid Snake, and he's smoking a cigarette with his head down to the wind. The next moment, Snake tosses the cigarette aside and breaks into a run across the bridge. Suddenly, he goes into Stealth mode (a la Predator), vaults himself over the bridge and bungee jumps down onto the tanker below — freakin' awesome! There's plenty more, but you'll have to wait for next issue...

Genre Action/Adventure
Publisher Konami
Developer Konami
Release Date Fall, 01

RC Revenge Pro

Acclaim's PlayStation RC Revenge, the much, much better sequel to the shoddy Revolt, has only been on store shelves a few weeks and yet they are already well under way with an enhanced PlayStation2 version to be out before the end of the year. While the game will feature all of the tracks, vehicles and power-ups from the PS1 version, there will still be a lot of new goodies added to the game. To begin with, the game's graphic engine has been kicked up into high-res and is running at 60 frames per second. In addition, there are a variety of new RC vehicles to unlock, new tracks and locales to race on, and some other cool features, such as the addition of an on-screen rear-view mirror. For those that haven't played the original, RC Revenge Pro is a kart-style racing game featuring RC-style cars and boats. In the game, you will battle it out for first place against a variety of themed environments, including a haunted house, an Incan temple, a cartoon world and a PS2-specific pirate ship level.

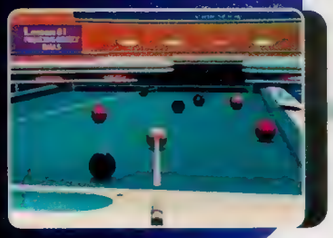
Genre Racing
Publisher Acclaim
Developer Acclaim Studios
Release Date December, 00



COOL POOL

Get ready for not one, but two Pool games coming to the PlayStation2 within the first month of its launch. The first, Cool Pool: Billiards Master, courtesy of Take 2 Interactive and Ask Games, was originally released in Japan under the title of Dokyu Billiards. This 3D pool simulation challenges players to a variety of extremely realistic pool games. Featuring beautiful, high-res graphics and realistic ball physics (which include friction, speed, collision and roll), Cool Pool delivers the ultimate pool experience without getting out of your chair. Choose from a wide variety of game styles, including US Nine, Eight, Straight Pool, Rotation, Frozen and Free Play, plus several bonus games — Bowlliards, Carrot and Random Six. The game can be played from many different camera angles and parameters, and players can even train and strengthen their skills in a Lesson Mode, where they can practice basic to advanced techniques, such as curve shots and position play.

Genre Pool
Publisher Take 2
Developer Ask Games
Release Date October, 00



MIDNIGHT CLUB

Rockstar/Angel Studios' Midnight Club is just about ready for release (a 95% complete version skated across our desks just as we were going to press). While we have previewed this game many, many times before, this latest version represents such a huge improvement/change from the last, that we had to show it at least one more time before it gets reviewed in the magazine. The difference between this latest rev and the one before it (which is only a week older) is astounding! Cars now have lightsourcing applied to them — they are shiny and reflect the environments and street lights, the frame rate has been improved (it's not at 60, but the developers claim that it's still a possibility), and the environments themselves seem to be much more animated and are coming to life. The game's modes are also in place, which include a Career Mode and an Arcade Mode. The Career Mode offers a total of 39 waypoint and head-to-head races where you'll have to work your way up the ranks by racing and beating a variety of opponents. The Arcade Mode offers up some cool alternatives, such as cruising the cities and Capture the Flag. Read more about them and the game in next month's review.

Genre Racing
Publisher Rockstar
Developer Angel Studios
Release Date October 26, 00

THE BOUNCER

Squaresoft's The Bouncer still hasn't been shown in playable form, although they have finally released a bunch of new screenshots showcasing actual in-game footage. If you didn't catch the game's storyline from last month's preview, it revolves around a young bouncer named Sion Barzahd who works at a local bar called FATE. On a typical day like any other, he is visited by his sweetheart Dominque while on the job. As he goes to greet her, she is violently grabbed away by a gang of evil henchmen and all Sion can do is helplessly watch as she's skirted away. It's up to you, with the help of some friends, to find Dominque and take out the perpitrators before harm comes to her. From the screens we've been given, it's evident that the in-game characters are extremely detailed and are comprised of thousands of polygons. The gameplay looks a lot like a Final Fight/Fighting Force experience, with real-time, cinema-style cut-scenes mixed-in that are triggered by your actions.

Genre Action/Fighting
Publisher Square EA
Developer Squaresoft
Release Date December, 00

REAL POOL

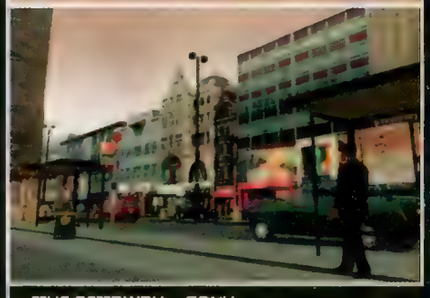
Not content to let Take 2 hog the genre, Infogrames has picked up the other Japanese pool game, developed by Takara (anyone remember Battle Arena Toshinden?) and will be releasing an American-style, localized version here in the States — sometime before that all-important Thanksgiving shopping weekend. Real Pool combines realism, variety and plenty of fun for both pool players and video gamers looking to break some balls. In the game, you can learn and practice tough trick shots, play all your favorite pool games and challenge your skills on new, miniature golf-style tables. Or, if you prefer a little competition, you can match your skills with eight computer controlled opponents, each with their own characteristics. Real Pool features 12 different pool games (Eight Ball, Nine Ball, Rotation, Bowlliards, Carom, etc.), real-world physics, a 360 degree viewing angle, one and two player competitive action and a very cool Puzzle mode, where you have to work your way through 25 deviously shaped tables.

Genre Pool
Publisher Infogrames
Developer Takara
Release Date November, 00

The PlayStation2 should be hitting retail shelves just as this issue is hitting newsstands, and oh what a glorious launch it should be. With great titles such as EA's SSX, Madden, NHL and Nascar, Rockstar's Smuggler's Run and Midnight Club, Namco's Ridge Racer V and Tekken Tag Tournament, THQ's Summoner, and even Agetec's Armored Core 2, Eternal Ring and Evergrace, there should be a game for just about everyone. Looking into the near future, the second generation of games are going to raise the bar even higher and, as early as May next year, we will be playing games like Gran Turismo 2000, Dark Cloud, The Getaway, Soul Reaver 2 and Metal Gear Solid 2 (fingers crossed). The cool thing is, there are still a lot of wild cards surrounding launch and beyond, as more and more developers are revealing games they've either picked up from Japan or have secretly been working on. There are still quite a few mysterious question marks, starting with Sony and stretching out to developers such as Naughty Dog and Insomniac Games. Only time will tell...

THE GETAWAY – SONY

THE GETAWAY – SONY



THE GETAWAY – SONY

THE GETAWAY – SONY

THE GETAWAY – SONY

THE GETAWAY – SONY

METAL GEAR SOLID 2 – KONAMI

SOUL REAVER 2 – EIDOS

SOUL REAVER 2 – EIDOS

DARK CLOUD – SONY

DARK CLOUD – SONY

DARK CLOUD – SONY

METAL GEAR SOLID 2 – KONAMI

SOUL REAVER 2 – EIDOS

SOUL REAVER 2 – EIDOS

DARK CLOUD – SONY

DARK CLOUD – SONY

DARK CLOUD – SONY

GRAN TURISMO 2000 – SONY

GRAN TURISMO 2000 – SONY

GRAN TURISMO 2000 – SONY

GRAN TURISMO 2000 – SONY

GRAN TURISMO 2000 – SONY

GRAN TURISMO 2000 – SONY

CHALK ONE UP... ON PLAYSTATION®2 !

REAL POOL™

Bring home the most realistic pool simulation ever!

Over 12 different pool games!

Complete 360º views!

Line up and sink the perfect shot!

Unique Puzzle Mode...

Real-world physics!

...with 25 new tables!

COMING SOON ON PLAYSTATION®2 COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

PlayStation 2

TAKARA

INFOGRAMES

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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ACTION BASS

After a hard day of fishing under the sun or competing in a tournament, you look with awe at the trophies your angling skills have awarded you. In this action-packed arcade style fishing game, the player can either spend time leisurely casting across lake waters waiting for a bite on the line or they can enter an intense fishing competition where the only fish that matters is the biggest catch of the day. Along the way players will face all sorts of challenges including shifting water conditions, unstable weather and even more skilled opponents as he continually attempts to outwit the wily bass during each season of the year. Amazingly realistic fish behavior ensures that no fish is caught without a fight and that reeling in a winner delivers optimum angling action excitement.

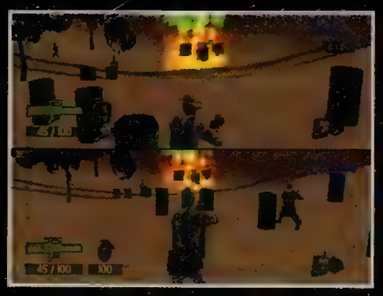
- Tournament-style Challenge Mode, free-wheeling Free Mode, and an Extra Bonus Mode.
- Lure Action Gauge allows the player to monitor lure movement easily.
- Enjoy watching fish (up to five heaviest) you brought back in the Aquarium Mode.
- Five diverse lures are available at the beginning, covering a wide range of water conditions and lure movements. More lures will be available as the player gains experience.
- Wide variety of "lure action" possible to attract bass, some requiring retrieving or rod movements only, others requiring skillful combination of the two.

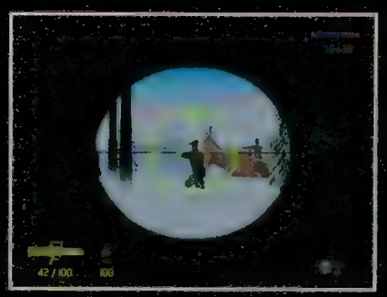
$9.99* GOT GAME? **$9.99***

*Suggested Retail Price

WWW.TAKE2GAMES.COM

SPEC OPS:
STEALTH PATROL





Welcome to the US Army Rangers, one of the toughest and most elite of the world's military task forces. Your main objective is to control your team of Rangers and eliminate opponent targets while completing mission sub-tasks in the time allotted. Choose between stealth or all out frontal assault- it's up to you. 3D action, time pressure and realistic combat will keep you begging for more.
Immersed in huge, outdoor 3D environments you and your team members must successfully execute your tasks which revolve around several different mission objectives including reprisal attacks, seize and destroy missions, counter-terrorist attacks and raid and destroy missions. Each environment is unique, not only in look and feel, but in game play as well. With the emphasis on action and realism, navigate your team with guns blazing or silently under the cover of darkness across landscapes of thick jungle, barren desert, arctic tundra and dense forest.

Do you have what it takes? Will you be able to complete your mission, though you may be the lone survivor?

- :: 5 intense mission campaigns each with numerous sub-missions based on real activities carried out by the US Army Rangers
- :: An arsenal to choose from including shotguns, grenades, machine guns, sniper rifles and more
- :: 3 difficulty levels - Private (Easy), Corporal (Medium), Sergeant (Difficult) offers massive replay value
- :: In the 2 Ranger option the player has simultaneous control of 2 Rangers
- :: Create an inventory filled with hi-tech equipment to aid the Rangers in their tasks - GPS navigation for moving through dense landscape, tripwire mines to booby trap enemies, nightvision goggles for stealth accuracy, med kits for injury repair and more

$9.99* GOT GAME? **$9.99***

*Suggested Retail Price

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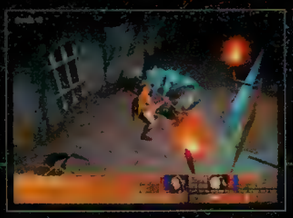
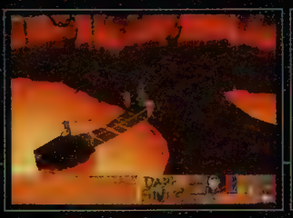
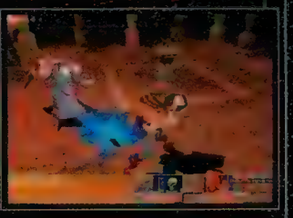
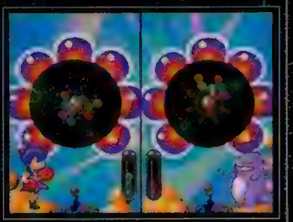
DARKSTONE

Roll with the punches! Roll over the competition!

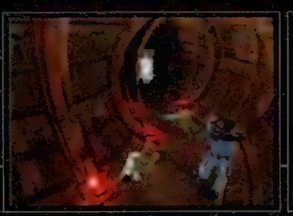
SPIN JAM

Ultra-addictive arcade action puzzler!!!!!!!!!



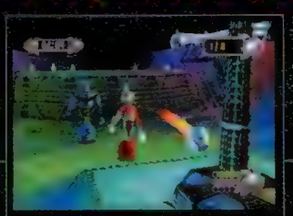
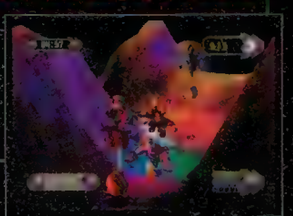
MARTIAN GOTHIC

Horror on an intergalactic scale!!



BALL BREAKERS

Roll with the punches! Roll over the competition!

PRO-PINBALL

BIG RACE USA

Pro Pinball: Big Race USA delivers more adrenaline-pumping action than your brain can handle!

$9.99* GOT GAME? $9.99*

*Suggested Retail Price

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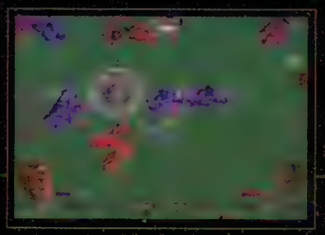
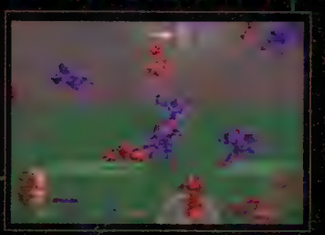
SPEEDBALL 2100

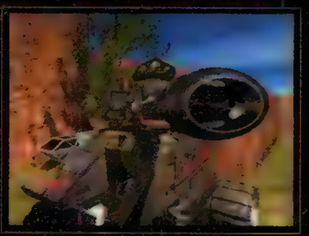
Extreme sports have been taken to the next Level!





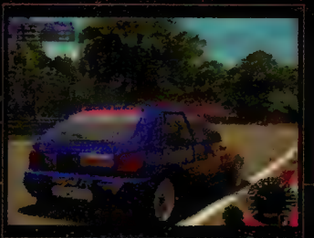
GRUDGE WARRIORS

There is no such thing as friendly fire.



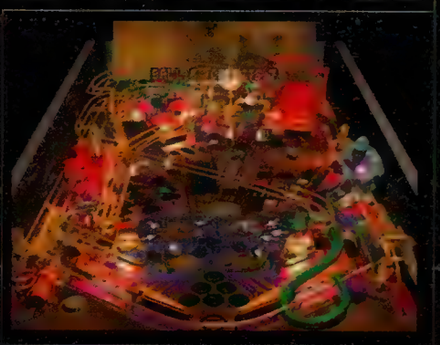
FORD RACING

Pulse pounding white knuckle action of ford racing is here!!



PRO-PINBALL FANTASTIC JOURNEY

Steam powered time travel will whisk you away into the world of pinball.



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PRODUCTS RANGE FROM EVERYONE to TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

TAKE2 Interactive

PlayStation

$9.99* GOT GAME? $9.99*

*Suggested Retail Price

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Don't count the PlayStation out yet, there are still a ton of PS1 games shipping this holiday season and well on into next year. While the emphasis seems to be heading more and more to the mass market (and much younger) gamer (as witnessed by the HUGE amount of cartoon-licensed, character based games), there are a few diamonds in the rough for the hardcore crowd. Thanks to Capcom (Dino Crisis 2), Activision (Tony Hawk 2, Blade), Infogrames (Driver 2, Alone in the Dark), Squaresoft (Final Fantasy IX) and Edios (Tomb Raider Chronicles, Fear Effect: Retro Helix), we will still be playing fun, immersive and satisfying experiences on the original hardware. In addition, while there are plenty of copy-cat, been-there-done-that games on their way, some might just surprise you, such as Infogrames' Bugs and Taz Time Busters, Eidos' Chicken Run, and even Crave's Mort the Chicken (the chicken legacy lives on!). Since space is at a premium during the fourth quarter, look to these pages to showcase a gallery of screens for upcoming PS1 titles.

BUGS & TAZ TIME BUSTERS – INFOGRAMES

BUGS & TAZ TIME BUSTERS – INFOGRAMES

BUGS & TAZ TIME BUSTERS – INFOGRAMES

THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE – SONY

THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE – SONY

THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE – SONY

LOONEY TUNES RACING – INFOGRAMES

LOONEY TUNES RACING – INFOGRAMES

LOONEY TUNES RACING – INFOGRAMES

MORT THE CHICKEN – CRAVE

MORT THE CHICKEN – CRAVE

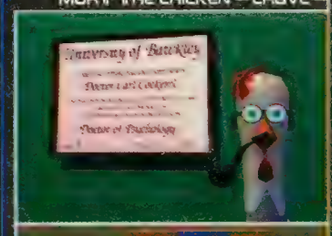
MORT THE CHICKEN – CRAVE

LOONEY TUNES RACING – INFOGRAMES

LOONEY TUNES RACING – INFOGRAMES

LOONEY TUNES RACING – INFOGRAMES

MORT THE CHICKEN – CRAVE



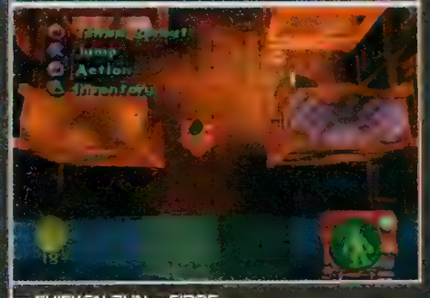
MORT THE CHICKEN – CRAVE

MORT THE CHICKEN – CRAVE

CHICKEN RUN – EIDOS

Moo. Ayup! That's a thought. We could use that old butter knife from one of the huts, and I'm sure there are some broken chairs around somewhere.

CHICKEN RUN – EIDOS



CHICKEN RUN – EIDOS

WOODY WOODPECKER RACING – KONAMI

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WOODY WOODPECKER RACING – KONAMI

MOTO RACER WORLD TOUR – INFOGRAMES

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ALONE IN THE DARK – INFOGRAMES

CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER – MATTEL

CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER – MATTEL

DRIVER 2 – INFOGRAMES

DRIVER 2 – INFOGRAMES

DRIVER 2 – INFOGRAMES

007 RACING – EA

007 RACING – EA

007 RACING – EA

CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER – MATTEL

CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER – MATTEL

DRIVER 2 – INFOGRAMES

DRIVER 2 – INFOGRAMES

DRIVER 2 – INFOGRAMES

007 RACING – EA

007 RACING – EA

007 RACING – EA

ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM ROBOTS – MATTEL

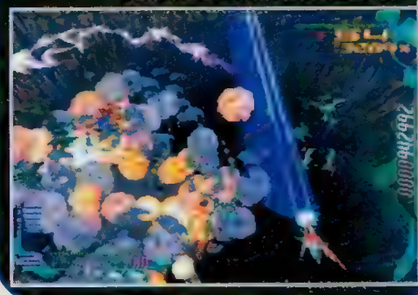
ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM ROBOTS – MATTEL

ROCK 'EM SOCK 'EM ROBOTS – MATTEL

RAYCRISIS – WORKING DESIGNS

RAYCRISIS – WORKING DESIGNS

RAYCRISIS – WORKING DESIGNS

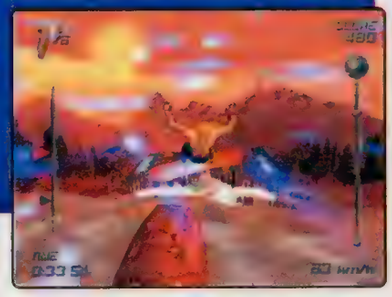


BY GREG OFF

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	EA Canada
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

SSX SNOWBOARDING



Feeding into the extreme sports genre (which received a much-needed shot in the arm a year or so ago with Activision's Tony Hawk Pro Skater), SSX is based on the new extreme sport, Boardercross. Combining high-speed snowboard racing with big air tricks, SSX could be characterized as one part Road Rash, one part Cool Boarders, with a hefty dose of originality thrown in for good measure. This game is all about outlandish tricks, eye-popping visuals, super-fast gameplay and trying to stay ahead of the pack — and it delivers on all accounts.

The basic meat and potatoes of SSX is the World Circuit, which lets you choose from an initial roster of four characters (with another four that you can unlock as you progress through the game). From World Circuit, you'll be offered the choice of three game modes: Warmup, Race and Showoff. Once you've built up your confidence and boardering abilities in Warmup, you can move on to the Race mode. The Race mode is much like any other racing game, where you race against a circuit of up to six other riders in a mad dash for first place and the finish line. The key here is that you'll have to race the same course three times and, as long as you stay in the top three, you will be awarded with a Bronze, Silver or Gold medal. By receiving a medal at the end of the three races (quarter-final, semi-final and final), you'll be rewarded with a new track to race on, as well as experience points which you can then apply to your rider's abilities (which are comprised of Edging, Speed, Stability, and Tricks). The gain in points translates to improved performance on the slopes and the higher the medal, the more points you earn. In the end, there are six courses to race on in Race mode. Each in itself is amazing and, believe it or not, completely different than the one before it. These fantasy courses range from the icy mountains of Japan and the sun-drenched slopes of Europe, to the snow-covered city streets of New York and even an iceberg towed in to an island port in Hawaii. Each is filled with death-defying drops, huge banks, steep turns, tunnels, tons of hidden shortcuts and plenty of opportunities for big air. The last game mode, Showoff, gives you the opportunity to go solo and strut your stuff in order to amass enough trick points to win Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. Here, you'll be competing against time in a checkpoint race and can maximize the points you earn by grabbing specially-placed Snow Crystal Multipliers throughout each course.

Successfully pulling off insane tricks is one of SSX's main game mechanics. As you pull off each trick, you'll fill up your Adrenaline Bar, which is located along the right of the screen. As you juice up your bar, you can then hit the square button to execute a quick speed boost. This becomes a necessity, not only to pull ahead of the other racers, but to use it to get higher air in order to pull off better tricks which, in turn, replenish your bar — get it? Once you become acquainted with a track, you'll be consumed with trying to find any areas/opportunities where you can just get a little air to pull off another trick. As you discover more tricks (there are literally hundreds), they are recorded in your Trick Book. Executing new tricks also unlocks extra outfits.

I haven't even mentioned the graphics and music, which put most other PS2 launch titles to shame. This game delivers a blistering-fast, 60 frames per second frame rate pretty much all of the time — even in the two player split-screen mode (without any loss of graphic detail, I might add). The tracks are highly detailed and the 3D engine is running in the PS2's high resolution mode without any of the often-complained-about jaggies. When you see this game running, your jaw will drop to the floor, guaranteed.

There are plenty of other things to mention about this game, including extra bonus tracks and modes, the intuitive control (which requires you to use both the analog thumbsticks and the D-pad), unbelievable special effects, the great music soundtrack and the replayability factor, which is way high.

BOTTOM LINE

All I have to say is, thank your lucky stars for Electronic Arts! The talented development team up at EA Canada has produced nothing short of a PS2 masterpiece right out of the gate and it should not be missed. The fact that one of, if not THE, best games available at launch is a snowboarding game still amazes me. In any event, this game should be on your list as a "must buy" come October 26th.

SCORE:

99%

PS2 EDITOR'S CHOICE PLATINUM

COMPATIBILITY 1 or 2 Players

Madden NFL 2001

Genre	Sports
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	EA Sports
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

There is no other word for it; Madden NFL 2001 is an audio-visual masterpiece! For those of you who have seen or played NFL 2K on the Sega Dreamcast, and marveled at the graphic look of the game, you will be blown away by how much better Madden is on PS2.

Between the high polygon count players, life-like animations, color, resolution and audio that bring both the stadium and the broadcast booth to life, you are in for a treat. In our review of the game, we used the game's instant replay system to test the quality of the animation. Did the ball leave the QB's hand too early? Did the sound of a hit being applied or a ball landing in a receiver's hands occur at the EXACT animation frame that it was supposed to? We tested the quality of Pat Summerall's play-by-play and John Madden's color commentary. Did they stay up with the action or were they making the wrong calls? Did it sound and feel like they were really involved in the game? And, we tested the gameplay. Did the controls have that slippery feel that is associated with frame rates that dip below 30 FPS? Did the computer opponent put up a struggle?

The answer to all of these questions, and many more like them, is that in every facet of the game, it either meets or exceeds what were already lofty expectations. There is no question that EA Sports has taken full advantage of their opportunity to lead in the marketplace and have created a stunning depiction of what it is like to be down on the field on a Sunday afternoon, with a TV by your side so you can enjoy the benefits of a broadcast presentation.

Game players and average football fans alike will simply be amazed by how much graphic and audio information is being presented simultaneously, and how seamlessly it all comes together. You go into the huddle to call a play. You decide to ask the coach for help (there are polygonal likenesses of every coach for every team in the NFL) and his voice kicks in — explaining to you the basics of why he wants you to call the play that he has chosen. At the same time, you are getting a real-time visual of something occurring on the playing field — which is completely random and varied. Other times, you will find your receiver driven out of bounds on a sideline route, and watch in amazement as he crashes into a cameraman and the polygonal picture taker collapses onto the turf. 3D icons, statistics and player photos come flying on and off the screen so quickly and smoothly that you will forget that this is an actual VIDEO GAME that gives you control over the proceedings — and you have a lot of control.

Madden NFL 2001 is as deep as it is beautiful. The basic gameplay engine is the latest version of what gamers have enjoyed over the past five years on the PlayStation, but with a level of sophistication and computer intelligence not previously seen in the series. It also has more features than you can possibly enjoy in the year you will have until the 2002 model makes its way into retail stores.

Specific to this PS2 game, Madden NFL 2001 brings a whole new level of realism to the game. Graphically, the game depicts position-specific details like facemasks, eye black, wristbands, turf tape, etc. and facial expressions that are semi-unique (most of the skill players are semi-recognizable, although the faces all have a similar, generic look to them). In the sound department, the team of Summerall and Madden have never been better, or more accurate. The quality of the sound samples is at an entirely new level, when compared to the PS1 games.

By setting the audio-visual bar at such a high level so early in the PS2's lifecycle, EA Sports now has the chance to experiment with gameplay and control and give players the gameplay revolution that would truly distance the PS2 experience from all others that have come before.

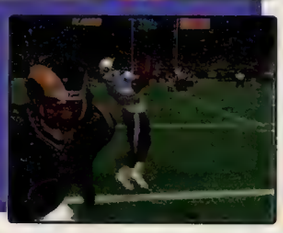
SCORE:

PS2 EDITOR'S CHOICE PLATINUM

98%

BOTTOM LINE

Folks, EA Sports has left out nothing and have, in the process of creating Madden NFL 2001, single-handedly brought the PS2 to life. Need a reason to buy this system and you are a football fan? You've just found it. An absolutely outstanding achievement that is made even more impressive by the fact that it is a launch title.



1 or 2 Players

COMPATIBILITY

BY DAVE WINDING

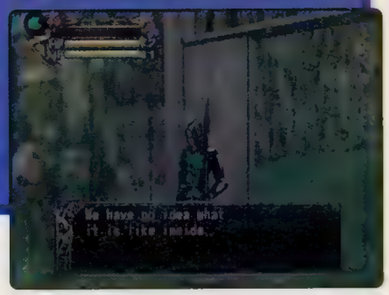
ETERNAL RING

Genre	RPG
Publisher	Agetec
Developer	From Software
Origin	Japan
Format	DVD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Those of you who were around for the PlayStation launch in 1995 might remember a title from ASCII called "King's Field" (and its sequel, King's Field 2). This action RPG series attracted quite the cult following in its day and now the developer of the game, Japan's From Software, is back with the next-generation follow-up, entitled "Eternal Ring." While it may not appeal to everyone on your holiday shopping list, fans of the series are in for a next generation visual treat.

Eternal Ring is a first-person RPG in a variation of the classic tradition — featuring Hit Points, Magic Points, spells and the like. Much like its predecessors, it is a slow-developing affair that has you moving back and forth across different landscapes and inside buildings, in search of items and bosses. Along the way, you fight a good assortment of enemies that become increasingly powerful as you progress deeper into the game.



The game plays out like a typical dungeon crawler, albeit a very good looking dungeon crawler. Most of the bad guys that inhabit the different areas of the game will re-appear when you attempt to come back to an area. They will put up a small struggle, but are all designed to respond to your aggression in a simple attack pattern that is easily and quickly recognizable. There are a number of doors in these first areas that can not be accessed until you have the red (Earth) and blue (Water) keys that cause them to swing open. In addition, there are doors covered in vines that can only be opened once you've acquired your first Ring — the Fire Ball. It is the acquisition of these Rings that is at the center of gameplay. By obtaining the Rings (and the different gems that you are awarded for defeating enemies), you increase your ability to create different types of Magic and gain access to areas of the game that you previously could not enter. It is all very linear, yet also very entertaining.

The first boss is a demon that attacks in a set, circular pattern and that is also quite susceptible to the Fire Ball — which is good, since this is the only Ring in your possession at the moment! He will shoot the occasional ball of water at you and take a swipe if you should venture too close. But, after tasting the heat from your Fire Ball Ring a few times, he goes down to defeat, leaving the Ring of Insight for your future demon-destroying pleasure! You also gain access to a door that allows you to speak with the Water Dragon — who tells you to find Lyla and gives you the Water Key — allowing you to open the blue doors in the castle... and so the adventure begins! From this point, you head back to the village to find it burned to the ground — at the hand of what appears to be some sort of arch-angel. With the exception of one soldier, everyone in the village has been killed. You enter the warehouse, grab a sword off of the guy that issued you your first weapon earlier, then head through a blue door in the canyon wall — leading to the next area of the game — a world composed of stone and water with a feel of ancient Greece. This, in turn, leads to a large cavern that features poisonous butterflies. The game's difficulty level begins to build as you accept the challenge of this area and continues to become more challenging as the story draws you in and the game develops.

Graphically, Eternal Ring shares a lot in common with Agetec/From Software's other launch title, Evergrace. The graphics engine is very solid and features great spot lighting effects and nice weapons and spell effects. Enemies die in varied ways and have different attacks that are impressive as well. The game environments are a blend of indoor and outdoor locales that are very clean looking — although lacking in detail. There are areas that are surrounded by water, others that feature grassy plains and small streams, and still others that are mountainous and that feature rocky terrain. But, also like Evergrace, there is a certain antiseptic feel to the environments that keeps them from coming to life. There just doesn't seem to be enough going on, in terms of incidental animations in the play environments. Of course, this is fairly typical of most of the launch titles and this criticism is no more or less weighted in the case of Eternal Ring.

The music soundtrack is outstanding — featuring a classical soundtrack that changes with each environment and that also changes to accommodate significant battles in the game. The voice acting is also surprisingly good. The timing between the subtitles and the voices could be better, but it's a small complaint and, given the simply terrible acting that is part and parcel in the world of video games, to the point of becoming cliche, Agetec should be commended for their work in this area — particularly in an RPG available at launch.

BOTTOM LINE

Eternal Ring will satisfy fans of the series and is worth a look even if you are normally not a fan of this type of game. Solid graphics, great music and voice and a long, challenging quest make it a great value for those looking to test their dungeon crawling mettle.

SCORE: 90%

PSE2 EDITOR'S CHOICE GOLD

COMPATIBILITY: 1 Player

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BY ERIC WINDING

SWING AWAY GOLF

Genre	Sports
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	T&E Soft
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	November

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

EA Sports has been publishing internally developed golf games for over a decade. However, Swing Away Golf represents the company's first attempt at publishing a Japanese developed product for the North American market. This, however, is not a new concept as both Sony and Nintendo have had prior success taking Japanese golf simulations and localizing them for American consumers (Sony with the Hot Shots Golf franchise on the PS1 and Nintendo with Mario Golf for the N64). The developer for Swing Away Golf (called Paradise Golf in Japan) is a company that has been making golf games longer than EA — T&E Soft. Anybody who has been playing golf games on Nintendo systems since the NES days has most certainly played one of their games.

The gameplay in Swing Away Golf remains true to the simulation aspect found in all T&E Soft games, with the noticeable addition of Hot Shots-like power-ups and bonus systems. In fact, even the characters — highly animated, stereotypical Japanese fantasy types — have been "adapted" from Hot Shots and Mario (Mario Golf was actually developed by the same guys that did Hot Shots, Camelot, but featured familiar Nintendo characters in place of the fantasy characters). Regardless of the character traits, the focus for Swing Away is on the "Story Mode", what would normally be called "Career" mode here in the States. You start Story Mode by selecting one of the 7 available characters (there are an additional three that need to be unlocked) and then distributing the 100 given Skill Points among four categories: distance, accuracy, control, and recovery. After you have done that, you can check out these three options — Modes, Home, and Golf Shop. At the Golf Shop, you could buy products and equipment to help improve your game, if you had any money. But, being only a "beginner", you've got nothing but lint in your pockets. So, exit the shop and check out what's inside your Home: See Records, Golfing Equipment, Trophy Room, Item List, Prize Money Ranking, Popularity Ranking, Caddie, and Replay Scene. Most of the selections are self-explanatory, except for the Popularity Ranking. This is an odd inclusion (i.e. doesn't quite make the cultural translation), and is an indicator of how well you're playing and how good your equipment is!? You can choose one of six different caddies under the "Caddie" banner, and check out your stats in most of the other selections (since you haven't played in any tournaments yet, most of them don't apply right now). In the Modes option, you can either practice, enter a beginner or amateur tournament (two different events), or skip ahead one month. Swing Away Golf tracks your progress through months and years, kind of like a clock in an RPG. It has no impact on what occurs in the game, however.

When you choose a tournament, you'll notice that there's no prize money to be won, only Skill Points. You will play in a Public and an International tournament before you can take the test to become a pro. The formats for the tournaments alternate between stroke and match play. Depending on the character you selected, you will be greeted by a rival player and will pair up with him/her (although you're still competing against the entire field). This may seem like a neat little gameplay element, but it really slows down the pace of play, as the round ends up taking twice as long as if you were just out there by yourself. If you win the tournament, you'll be awarded the Skill Points and can then distribute them as you see fit. As you progress from tournament to tournament, you'll get other game modes, like Longest Drive, Survivor, and Closest to the Pin. To liven things up, there's a Bet Mode which can be turned on to allow you to wager money or items against CPU players before the start of each contest.

By the time all is said and done, there are 37 tournament trophies to be won, and dozens of equipment (clubs, balls, shoes, etc.) upgrades to be won/purchased. You could be playing Swing Away Golf for a very, very long time!

At first glance, you may not be as impressed with the look of Swing Away as you will be after playing it for about an hour. The detail on the players is amazing, as you can see every stitch and seam on the clothes, and reflections off of the sunglasses! The players all animate smoothly, and the tree branches blow gently in the breeze. The game automatically switches camera angles, keeping a fresh look on the gameplay. But, it would have been nice to see sand spray after a bunker shot or divots fly in the air after short iron shots.

BOTTOM LINE

Swing Away Golf combines the traditional T&E Soft golfing experience with updated Hot Shots Golf elements for one excellent time on the links. The skill level is simple enough for beginners and sophisticated enough for the experts. A little more time in the localization process wouldn't have hurt, though (the text boxes contain many odd sentences and logic inconsistencies abound). All around, a great way to start your PS2 sports library.

SCORE: 93%

PSE2 EDITORS' CHOICE GOLD

COMPATIBILITY 1-4 Players

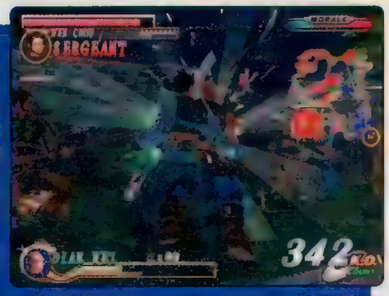
MIDWAY
www.midway.com
Destruction Derby Raw. Coming soon to a skyscraper near you.
The highly anticipated sequel is here at last. With even more of those metal-shredding flips, spins and roof-crushing rolls we've all grown to love. One to four players can race, crush, and completely annihilate 18 different cars, on 31 tracks. With frame-bending jumps, tunnels, crossovers, and all kinds of glass-splintered routes, including one that ends kind of abruptly on the sidewalk--about 90 stories below.
PlayStation
EVERYONE
E
Animated Violence
PlayStation
DESTRUCTION DERBY RAW

BY GREG OFF

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2

Genre	Action/Fighting
Publisher	Koei
Developer	Omega Force
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



A quick history lesson; The story of Dynasty Warriors is based on real Warlords and real battles. In 2nd century AD, the Roman Empire is at its peak. In Japan, the Yayoi period is drawing to a close. North America is a territory that will lay undiscovered for the next 1200 years. In China, widespread corruption has deteriorated the ruling and power of the Han Dynasty. An uprising, called The Yellow Turban Rebellion, begins a chain of events that allows the tyrannical warlords, He Jin and Dong Zhuo (no relation to Long Duc), to take control of the dynasty. But their rule is short lived, as no one warlord is powerful enough to keep China united. China becomes a war-torn country riddled with small warlords vying against each other for land and power. Eventually, three warlords rise above the rest and create their own kingdoms (hence, Romance of the Three Kingdoms) — Cao Cao of the Wei kingdom, Sun Qian of the Wu kingdom and Liu Bei of the Shu kingdom. In the game, you will take control of one of nine warriors (three from each of the Shu, Wu and Wei kingdoms), and fight your way through intense melees and battles in order to lead your army to victory. Your ultimate goal — control and supremacy over China for your warlord.

Let's get the basics out of the way before we dive into the technology of the game. The whole gist behind DW2 is getting down and dirty on the battlefield, plowing down upwards of 700 men as you and your army advance against the enemy. Throughout each of the game's five stages (which are huge, by the way), you will hack, slash, shoot and slay over and over again, until you can complete your ultimate goal — which typically involves finding and killing the enemy commander (better know in game-speak as the "boss"). There are two modes to play through — Musou and Free — and a total of 20-plus characters to play as (although you have to open up over half of them by completing the game in various ways). The Musou mode is the game's story mode, where you will advance through each stage and the events will unfold as you do so. In the Free mode, you can basically play any of the levels you've opened up in Musou, with the first two unlocked. Each of the nine characters have their own special weapons, strengths, weaknesses and attributes, and they can be strengthened by collecting special items left behind by certain enemies during battle. It's very important to "level-up" your character as much as possible, as each stage gets progressively harder. In fact, if a stage gets too hard (which happened to me at stage three), you can head into the Free mode and choose an earlier stage to increase your attributes. Your character's points are saved from stage-to-stage and cross over into both modes.

While it might sound like the game is a Final Fight/Golden Axe-style free-for-all, this is not exactly true. While, at its core, it is a 3D hack-and-slash, there are certain strategy elements that you must be concerned about at all times during the game. To start, you must keep an eye an your army's and opponent's morale at all times. As the battles become heated and men are being killed off, your troops might get discouraged and lose faith. It will be up to you, by choosing which battles to join in and who needs the most help, to keep the morale up so they will fight hard for you. Also, you can't just head into a battle without some planning. If you think that you can just head straight for the general without clearing certain lesser commanders, gate guard, officers, etc. then you will be pushing up daises faster then you can say "help me Jebus!" (Simpson's humor, just in case you're not a fan). If you get too far ahead, and leave the fighting to your troops, you will find yourself at the hands of defeat always and often.

Graphically, DW2 impresses. There are upwards of 30-40 high-polygon count characters on-screen at all and any times, and the frame rate rarely falls below 30. Special effects include light-sourcing, color shading and nice weather effects (fog, snow, etc.). While the battlefields themselves are on the sparse side, and there is a bit of background haze to keep the framerate up and the draw distance close, it is completely forgivable. The music feels a bit strange for the game, with searing guitar licks and heavy metal-style jams (circa '88), but it's not offensive.

The only real negative about Dynasty Warriors is its repetitive gameplay. Levels can take upwards of two hours to complete, and most of that time is spent killing one enemy after another. While it's fun and satisfying at first, it gets old after awhile. The addition of the resource management elements does help break it up a bit, but I kept wishing that there was a bit more variety, like varying mission objectives, to mix it up a bit.

BOTTOM LINE

Koei's Dynasty Warriors 2 does not fail to impress with its technology, but doesn't quite deliver in the gameplay department. While the game does attempt to offer up variety in the form of strategic resource management and a variety of characters from which to choose, its main gameplay element — intense hand-to-hand battles — gets a bit old after the 600th enemy killed.

SCORE:

89%

SILVER

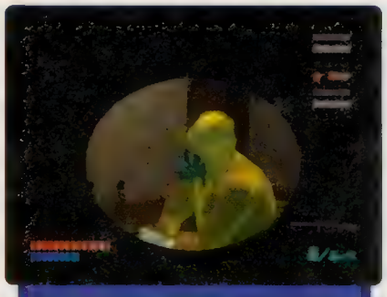
COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

X SQUAD

Genre	Action/Shooter
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	EA Square KK
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



Having a deep and involving adventure game ready for a new system at launch is not an easy task. Games like Metal Gear Solid and Syphon Filter (which X-Squad obviously aspires to be like) didn't appear on the PlayStation until years after it had been released. With this in mind, it's laudable that EA has taken on the task of delivering X-Squad on the 26th of October. While you probably are thinking that I'm setting this up review to go soft on EA's Japanese-developed game, this isn't the case. I'm just trying to lay down a frame of reference before I start critiquing this "interesting" title.

Here's the storyline; The year is 2037, a deadly plague has spread through a major metropolitan city, leaving death and destruction in its path. The only hope of finding a cure to this unknown and unforgiving disease lies in the hands of a small group of scientists who, as fate would have it, have been kidnapped and are being held hostage by a radical bio-terrorist group. As Ash, commander of the covert special operations team X-Squad, it's up to you to lead a hand-picked group of your best agents into a dangerous warzone, teeming with terrorists, in order to successfully bring back these scientists alive and in one piece. As always is the case, the world's fate depends on it.

As Ash, you're going to have to rely on your teammates to aid you in deadly firefights, help you out of sticky situations, head out to do a little reconnaissance and team up to solve puzzles. This is one of X-Squad's unique features, as you will be able to give commands to your individual team members via an artificial intelligence engine EA's marketing team has dubbed the "Buddy AIS". The list of commands you can execute is fairly limited, ranging from "Follow", "Recon" and "Stay", to "Stealth", "Assault", "Attack" and "Spread". While the idea behind being able to control other characters with commands in real-time, while controlling your own character, is definitely intriguing and cool (just look at Abe's Oddysee), it seems like it's not a necessary function in the game. For example, I commanded Maya (the first team member you come into contact with in the game) to Stay while I went on ahead with the first mission. As soon as I encountered an enemy, she was there, totally ignoring what I had ordered her to do in the first place. Over and over I ordered her to Stay and, as soon as I got a little further in the level, she was there. It seems to me like the Buddy AIS has its own agenda and will generally execute what you ask, as long as it fits into the game's scripted events and storyline. She's obviously not going to hang back while I complete the level alone, but then why offer up that command? Another example is the end boss on level one. This flame-throwing freak obviously needs to be attacked from both sides, thus the Spread command. But, if I don't give my teammate any command, she will just do her own thing and still attack him. After playing the game's first four levels, I ended up just totally ignoring the command system and seemed to do just as well. While your team might not listen to you, they will need your help often. Your buddies are definitely not impervious to enemy fire and will get hurt. It will be up to you to keep an eye on their inventories and give them the necessary items and weapons to keep up with the increasing difficulty level.

Controlling your character is also an interesting experience. The game requires you use both analog sticks, or the D-pad and the right analog stick, in order to move, aim your weapon and turn the camera. While this is not exactly an exercise in frustration, there is a learning curve involved. The control is most frustrating when you're engaged in huge firefights. It's very difficult to wrestle with the right thumbstick in order to aim while simultaneously trying to take evasive action with the left. I found that the best thing to do when this happens is to duck and take cover (there is always a crate or wall you can hide behind). This way, you can methodically take out the enemies without losing precious health in the interim. Some of the other things you can do with Ash include strafing, climbing up ledges, ducking and stealth-walking, and rolling forward and side-to-side.

As far as sound and graphics go, X-Squad has its pluses and minuses. The overall graphic engine is very nice, running in high-resolution mode and at a fast frame rate. The environments you play in are amazing looking, with plenty of nice graphical touches, including splashing water, smoke, steam and light sourcing. The characters are also well done. Each of the main characters have high poly counts and animate very fluidly. I wouldn't doubt if they were motion captured. The sound, on the other hand, is average at best. The constant music playing in the background is forgettable and doesn't fit the dangerous atmosphere of the game. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention the laughable voice acting, which is just as bad as the original Resident Evil.

SCORE:

SILVER

84%

BOTTOM LINE

I know it sounds like there are a lot of negatives for EA's X-Squad, but I still would recommend the game to those of you who are looking for a small dose of 3rd-person action/shooting out of the gate and can, like me, overlook some of the shortcomings in order to see the bigger picture. If you can do this, you'll find there is a fun and entertaining adventure awaiting you that should, at the very least, give you a small taste of what is coming down the pike.

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

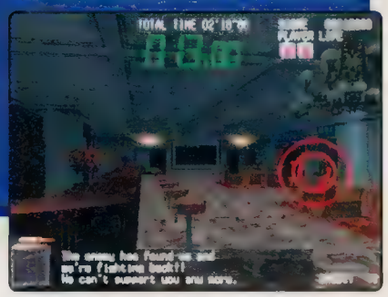
BY GREG OFF

SILENT SCOPE

Genre	Arcade Shooter
Publisher	Konami
Developer	Konami
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

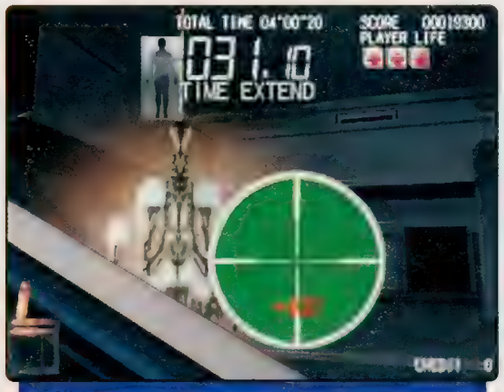
MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

The arcade landscape has changed quite a bit over the past five years. What used to be the place where you could go to check out the hottest games (which would hopefully be coming to a home console sometime in the near future) have either shut down, or have been transformed into virtual ghost towns. Most coin-op developers have pulled out of the market, mainly because it's too costly to produce the hydraulic, vibrating, rotating monoliths needed to separate today's jaded gamer from his cash. Why plunk down up to a buck a game for a 60-second experience when you can own virtually the same thing at home and play it all you like? While arcades are still thriving and healthy in Japan, if you want to play a coin-op in the States, you'll either have to travel great lengths to find a Dave & Busters or GameWorks, or brave the kiddie crowds at Chuck E. Cheese. Thankfully, not all coin-op developers have pulled out of the market entirely. Like Namco and Capcom, Konami still releases a game in the arcades here and there. This is where Silent Scope comes in, which has been sucking down quarters for the last year or so. The arcade game puts you in the role of a S.W.A.T.-style sniper, complete with a cabinet-mounted sniper rifle. In the coin-op, you use the rifle to aim at the small blips on screen (which appear larger than life, zoomed in through your "virtual scope") and have to react quickly, cleanly and decisively in order to take them out before you are hit or run out of time. Like some of the other shooting games in the arcade (such as Sega's Virtua Cop series and Namco's Time Crisis series), Silent Scope is "on rails", meaning you are not controlling where or how your character moves, just the aiming cursor on the screen.



While converting the high-end graphics over to the PS2 was obviously no problem, getting the gameplay right, especially without a light gun peripheral available, was probably another matter entirely. With this in mind, Konami has gone to great lengths to ensure that the end experience is as fun and easy to pick up and play as it would be in the arcade. Controlling your cursor on-screen is done with the left analog thumbstick. When holding down on the L1 button, your targeting cursor will zoom out and allow you to quickly move about the screen to get a general lock on your next target. When you are confident you have it positioned somewhere in the vicinity of your target (which is typically very small and sometimes next to impossible to see), you can then let go of the L1 button for the scope to zoom in. I found that, after a few minutes of play time, I had the controls down pretty well. While it's not exactly a perfect substitute for the sniper rifle, it does an adequate job. The developers have even gone so far as to offer up a host of control configurations, from adjusting the scope speed to being able to alter the scope magnification. Some of the other configurable options found in the game include adjusting the violence level (blood color can be changed or even turned on or off) and reversing your sight.

There are two major changes/additions to the home version of the game. The first major change is the amount of continues given. In the arcade, you could beat the game within 15 minutes (depending upon how many quarters you were willing to spend). With the home version, Konami wanted to make sure this wasn't going to happen, so they've limited the amount of continues to two and have made any extra dependent upon your performance. Overall, this really helps the play life of the game and makes it a much more fun and challenging experience. The second is the addition of a Training Mode, which offers up four new shooting gallery-style mini-games: Time Attack, Perfect Shot, Pop-Up Targets and Quick Shot. Each of these games throws a unique twist on the shooting experience, such as shooting as many targets in a row without missing for the most points, to shooting as accurately as possible (you get more points for head shots or shooting the guns vs standard body shots). In the end, Silent Scope is still an on-rails, arcade-style gun game that has its share of additions and features to give it some replay value. It's not necessarily going to light the charts on fire or even impress people expecting a true, next-generation experience, but it is fun and will appeal to gamers who enjoy these types of games. At first I was a little leery of the game, due to the absence of a light gun peripheral but, after spending some time with the game, I didn't miss it for a second.



BOTTOM LINE

Silent Scope tries hard to offer up more than the arcade experience and, for the most part, succeeds. If you're a fan of gun games, then you will probably find Silent Scope right up your alley, even with the absence of a light gun peripheral. While it's not going to be a game you'll play often after the first few weeks, it is definitely a short-term enjoyable experience.

SCORE:

89%

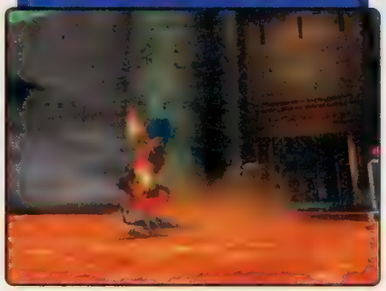
SILVER

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

EVERGRACE

Genre	Action/RPG
Publisher	Agetec
Developer	From Software
Origin	Japan
Format	DVD
# of Discs	1
Available	November



From Software's "Evergrace" was one of the first "new" experiences on the PS2 in Japan. As such, it was also the Japanese launch (or close to it) game that I looked forward to the most. Now that I have the American version in my hands, does it live up to my expectations? No, but it is an entertaining, sometimes wacky adventure game that is graphically solid, if unspectacular. It is one of those games that, a year or two from now, you might take a look at and think it could be interesting. But, in the feeding frenzy that is a new hardware launch, it will be of increased value. The good news is that there is a pretty decent game here for those that make the purchase.

Evergrace allows you to play the game as both male and female adventurers. At times during the game, you will be required to switch between them. Both characters play identically and are on the same basic quest — passing through primarily the same environments. The game proceeds in a fairly linear fashion, requiring that you trigger some action or event that will allow you to proceed deeper into the game. As you progress, you will encounter friends and enemies that will help you — giving you weapons, armor, information, etc., or attack you. Kill an enemy and you will usually receive some health potions, etc. In terms of monitoring your progress and making your way through the game, Evergrace makes use of save game crystals — one will usually appear in each distinct area of the game you enter. These crystals also double as the armor, weapons and health shop, where you can spend the money that you have earned from defeating enemies.

Much like From's other PS2 title, Eternal Ring, Evergrace features many classic RPG trappings, but it is not really an RPG. The game is a straight forward action/adventure. You will travel from area to area, speaking with other characters as you go, and fighting a ton of bad guys along the way. There is a lot of travel back and forth as you seek out whatever item you are missing to allow you to enter the next area. In addition, there are certain areas that one character will not be able to access, requiring you to switch to the other character. The puzzles, which were a little tricky in spots in the Japanese game, have been re-worked for the American release — making them a little better suited to the US gaming marketplace. Each unique type of enemy has a certain HP level — depicted by a power bar that depletes as you strike it. Some have the ability to defend, some can only be attacked from the back or will only receive damage if you hit them in a specific spot. Your character, on the other hand, features a meter that will go down after you've attacked the enemy and that will only recharge with time (provided that you are not running — it will only head toward 100% when you are in a standing position). As you make your way through the game, you will find yourself doing a lot of hitting and running — particularly in boss battles. This can be a little troublesome at times, particularly in small rooms where the camera comes in tight. In these situations, the fact that the camera does not follow your character becomes a problem. You have to constantly hit the R1 button to re-position the camera behind your character — just so you can get the enemy in your field of view. It's no problem if the bad guy is standing still but, if they are chasing you, things get a little testy.

The environments, while colorful and pleasing to the eye, don't really come alive. Everything has an attractive, yet somehow antiseptic, look to it. This may, in part, be due to the fact that Evergrace began its life as a PlayStation game and became a PS2 title during its infancy. It seems logical that the 3D engine for the game would be more structured to the strengths of the older sibling, rather than that of the newborn. While the game is in high-rez, it suffers from spots of slowdown.

The sound and music, as has been the case with nearly all of From Software's work, is top-notch and the music soundtrack features a cinematic quality to it that is consistent with the gameplay environment. The game's intro. music sets the proper tone — a lilting, gothic piece that gets the juices flowing for a good adventure, one that might just spook you a little — and the quality never drops.

SCORE:

SILVER

88%

BOTTOM LINE

Evergrace is a solid, entertaining game that shows just a little of what the PS2 is all about. While not the most exciting game you'll ever play, it offers original content and a nice, next-generation look and feel that will make the package attractive to PS2 early adopters.

COMPATIBILITY

1 Player

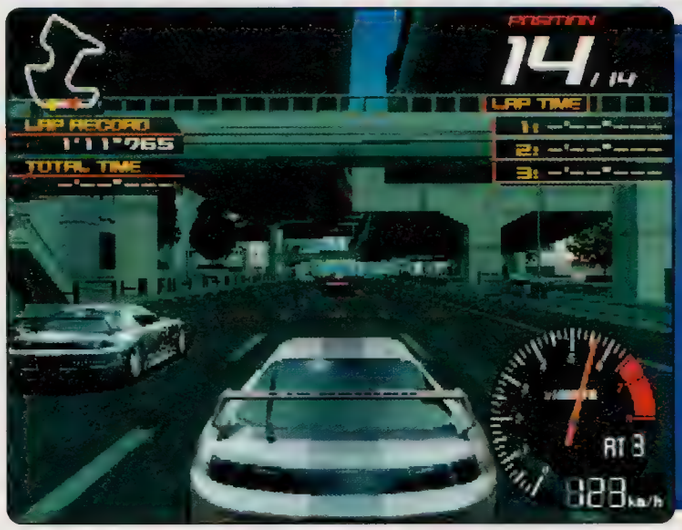
BY DAVE WINDING

Genre	Racing
Publisher	Namco
Developer	Namco
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

RIDGE RACER V

As the marquee title for the Japanese launch of PS2, Namco's Ridge Racer V is indicative of what you should expect of a first-generation title; The look is all-new and the gameplay and courses are very familiar. Not that this is necessarily a bad thing; The play mechanics found in the Ridge Racer series are simply the most exciting and exacting to be found anywhere, with spot-on control. And the track design is near perfection — not too short, not too long, with a balance of curves and straights that have you attempting to gun your way through the course. With all of the racing games available that have you braking at every turn, or attempting to re-create the ultimate in vehicle physics and handling, Namco has always stayed focused and given gamers a series that emphasizes speed, technique, fun and playability. Not much has changed in the trip to America — other than to translate the text for those of us that are Kanji-impaired. So, let's take a look at Japan's best-selling PS2 title.



Given the fact that the lead time was incredibly short, Namco has done a great job of showing off the tip of the PS2 technical iceberg. But, while it takes tracks from previous RR games and gives them some new wax and a good polish, it seems to be missing the "Emotion" part of the PS2 promise. Maybe it's just me, but I was expecting to see things occur that would bring the racing environments more to life: leaves blowing across the road as your tires kicked them up, trees swaying in the breeze, flags waving, waves rolling on the beach, etc. But, the game does offer incredible car models, some excellent (if somewhat faked) environmental mapping, great lighting, very cool night driving, sun and color effects, and speed, speed, speed. There is no question that it is the best looking racing game to ever appear on any system, but you have to know that people are expecting the PS2 racing games to do everything... even fill up their tanks! Still, whencompared to other PS2 racing games that will be coming out in the system's first year (at least the ones that we are aware of at this time), only GT 2000 offers the sophisticated, high-tech look of RR5 and it is a completely different style of gameplay — choosing to focus on advanced handling vs. speed and use of Drift-style vehicles and play mechanics.

The game plays a lot like RR4, with what seems to be an almost endless succession of four race competitions where you have to finish no lower than a certain place in the 14 car field. If you make it through the four race Grand Prix, you will receive a trophy and, from time to time, a new car. You begin by competing in the "Standard" class. After winning that trophy, four competitions become available in the "Extra" class. You beat these and you beat the game — although you can keep competing and earning additional cars. You can also paint your car, get a few new engines, look at your trophies, change the wheels, etc. — but you will be doing it on basically the same 6-7 tracks. Again, though; What the game lacks in originality it more than makes up for with beauty and addictive gameplay. I have played every RR game to death and, yes, I would love to see some new courses and see the game loosen up a bit (to include chasms, jumps, short-cuts, etc.), but you simply can't find better play mechanics in any racing game. So, yeah, you have to go back and forth on the same, smallish set of tracks, but the gameplay is so intense that you are almost completely focused on the cars you're racing against. And, that's in the one player game. When racing against a friend in split-screen mode, you get the same levels of detail and speed — a truly intense and competitive experience. In addition, RR5 offers an overall package, including menu screens and music and sound effects, that is very professional in look and sound. Although the musical soundtrack is not going to appeal to all players, I found the variety of musical styles to be very listen-able. While most racing games feature techno soundtracks that are just so much noise that they become un-listen-able after a short period of time, RR5 manages to remain fresh — so much so that I have never found myself trying to turn it off.

BOTTOM LINE

Ridge Racer V is a fast, beautiful racer that is hampered only by its feeling of "been there, done that." Although, admittedly, we have never been there or done that in so much style. And... there is just something about the play mechanics of the Ridge Racer series that have you grabbing for the controller again and again. A recommended purchase.

SCORE: 95%

PSE2 EDITOR'S CHOICE GOLD

COMPATIBILITY

1 or 2 Players

BY GARY STRASSBERG

DRAGON VALOR

Genre	Adventure
Publisher	Namco
Developer	Namco
Origin	Japan
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	NOW!

TEEN
ESRB

Make no mistake about it — Dragon Valor is definitely NOT a role-playing game. Don't be fooled by the fact that you play as different characters in a family over a period of five generations — or simply because it has the word "Dragon" in the title. In reality, the game's RPG elements are pretty few and far between, aside from the occasional scripted sequence and a simple character status screen.

Instead, Namco has delivered a fun, but uninspired action/adventure title that's heavy on hack 'n' slash combat and precariously thin on originality. Despite a few valiant attempts at innovation, Dragon Valor actually offers very little that hasn't been seen and done before. Its story begins as a typical tale of vengeance, when a young man named Clovis finds his village under attack by a dragon. Not only does the evil beast kill the brave Dragon Valor who was trying to stop it, but the creature also claims the life of Clovis' sister. Picking up the warrior's mighty sword, Clovis becomes the next Dragon Valor and vows to hunt down the dragon to avenge his sibling. So far, pretty standard stuff.

The game later introduces an interesting twist when Clovis gets married and has a son, who is the next in a series of characters you'll get to control as the years go by. Unfortunately, nothing significant changes when you play as the new characters, including your equipment and combat abilities. On the positive side, this means that players won't have to learn a whole new roster of moves, but it still seems like this promising plot device hasn't been fully utilized.

Speaking of moves, Clovis and his descendants have a full repertoire of abilities at their disposal, including several kinds of jumps, a nice variety of sword attacks, and the ability to run, crawl, block and evade attacks via a series of back flips. You also have a moderate selection of magic powers than can be acquired by defeating enemies, and these can be as helpful for solving some of the puzzles as they are in the heat of battle. The spells themselves are the standard fare (you know — fire, ice, healing, etc.), but a few of the effects are nicely done, like the cool invisibility spell. There are also plenty of typical "push the box onto the switch" type of puzzles, which have already been used ad nauseum in PlayStation games.

Players who enjoy exploring 3D worlds with complete freedom will likely feel restricted by Dragon Valor's incredibly linear gameplay. Most of the time, your characters can only travel the main path, even if there are side streets, alleyways or other areas that look like they can be explored. Plus, on the world map, you can typically only choose from one or two locations, even if you've already been to eight other places before. And woe to the warrior who mistakenly says "no" to the shopkeeper's offers, because once you leave the store, you often can't return until you've completed other adventures.

Despite all of these shortcomings, Dragon Valor is still a surprisingly fun game, thanks mainly to its intuitive control interface and smooth, responsive handling. The controls and gameplay feel very arcade-like, recalling your favorite side-scrollers of yesteryear. Even though your characters have a pretty formidable arsenal of moves, they are all easy to master, and soon you'll be cleaving your way through hordes of foul creatures with great glee. Fortunately, there's a nice assortment of enemies to disassemble, including orcs, skeletons, wolves, imperial guards, giant mantises, huge bats, lizard men, the obligatory dragons, and much more.

The bosses and sub-bosses are especially fun to fight — at least until you figure out their respective weaknesses, at which point it can sometimes degenerate into an exercise in tedium. Fortunately, if you get croaked during a boss battle, you do have the option to continue right at the beginning of the fight, with fully restored health and magic points. Because of this, most bosses can be whipped on the first or second try — but be careful not to die anywhere else in the level, or you'll find yourself all the way back at the beginning!

All things considered, Dragon Valor is a fairly decent title that's extremely linear and lacking in originality, but at least it delivers enough mindless, arcade-style combat to merit a look.

SCORE:

SILVER

84%

BOTTOM LINE

Dragon Valor offers nothing new, but there's still enough fun to be had by action fans craving a dose of hack 'n' slash, arcade-style mayhem. The story seems trite and the game is ridiculously linear, but the solid combat and responsive controls make it easy to get into.

COMPATIBILITY

Analog Control Compatible

1 Player

Muppet Race Mania

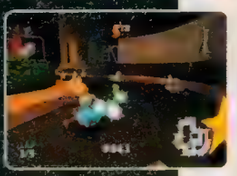
BY MARK ANDROVICH

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

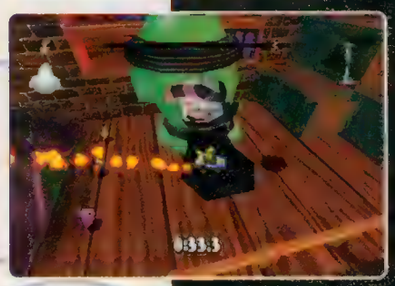
Genre	Racing
Publisher	Midway
Developer	Traveler's Tales
Origin	UK
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

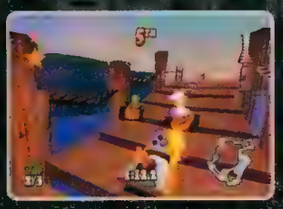
In Muppet Race Mania, Traveler's Tales has come up with approximately 34 courses, based upon themes taken from all of the Muppet motion pictures. There's a swamp (The Muppet Movie), gallery (The Great Muppet Caper), New York City (The Muppets Take Manhattan), and a pirate's island (Muppet Treasure Island) to name just a few. There are lots of shortcuts and hidden areas to be discovered in each course. While the majority of the tracks are viewed from behind the vehicle, there are six "stunt" tracks which are viewed from the side and six additional tracks viewed from overhead. Players can select from one of 25 different Muppets, each with their own unique vehicle which can also be driven by all of the other characters.

The tournament mode is arranged into three different challenges. The first two involve races on six different courses, while the last challenge is a six arena "battle mode" where the object is to be the last player standing. The "stunt" tracks are solo contests and must be successfully navigated like obstacle courses. Two players can compete in any of the tournaments or in single races on any of the tracks you have already unlocked. The overhead tracks also allow for racing the course in reverse, a hybrid "battle race," and a two-player only "chicken chase" in which the object is to locate poultry on the track.



Only one thing keeps this game from sharing the spotlight with Crash Team Racing and Mario Kart 64, which I consider the best cart racers around. Unfortunately, it is not a small matter either. The fact is, Muppet Race Mania uses a game engine (Toy Story 2) which isn't quite optimal for racing. And, you cannot rotate the camera manually. Overall, the vehicle control is just not tight enough. You feel as if you are bouncing over the tracks instead of driving on solid ground.





Bottom Line

Muppet fans will love this game, thanks to the inclusion of movie clips, voices, and almost every character you can think of. Cart racing fans may find the camera a little imprecise, but there are more than enough options here to make the game a recommended purchase.

Score: 93%

PSE2 Editor's Choice Gold

Compatibility

1 or 2 Players

Analog Control Compatible

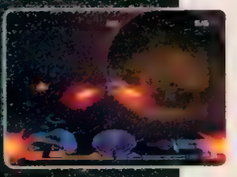
Star Trek Invasion

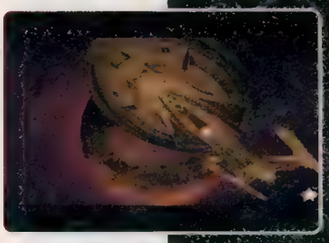
BY MARK ANDROVICH

EVERYONE — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

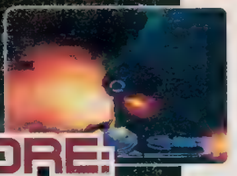
Genre	Shooter
Publisher	Activision
Developer	Warthog
Origin	UK
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

It has been a long time coming, but the PlayStation is finally seeing a Star Trek game courtesy of Activision and developer Warthog, a studio whose members were responsible for Privateer 2 (PC) and the Colony Wars series. Players take the role of Ensign Ryan Cooper, a recent Starfleet Academy graduate who has been assigned to the elite Red Squad group of cadets. Cooper pilots a Valkyrie-class attack ship, a small one-man fighter, as he undertakes various missions involving a new alien threat to the Federation. As the game is set in the Star Trek universe around the time of Next Generation and Deep Space Nine, expect to see familiar enemies such as the Cardassians, Romulans, and Borg. You'll also see and hear from Lt. Commander Worf, who acts as your commander, as well as the legendary Captain Jean Luc Picard.

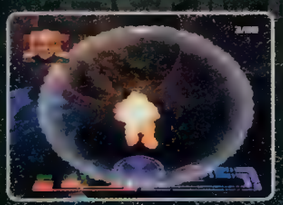




The game starts out with a handful of training exercises before throwing you headfirst into the action. After each mission, your performance is analyzed and further missions become accessible. ST: Invasion also features a multiplayer mode, something which the Colony Wars games lacked. However, the frame rate does drop noticeably when the action heats up, especially when there are large explosions on the screen.



Given the designers' pedigree, the look and feel of the game is understandably excellent. In fact, I'd say that Level four is the best-looking space battle I've ever seen. In fact, it is probably one of the best space themed shooters there is. It's just that, in spite of the fact that the music, familiar enemies such as Borg and Romulans, and voice acting by Michael Dorn and Patrick Stewart, it doesn't quite capture the "heart" of the Trek license.



Bottom Line

Invasion is a great game. It's just too bad that it follows three Colony Wars episodes. If you own any of those prior games, the Trek license is the only thing that makes this title stand out. Don't expect the underlying gameplay to be different than what you've seen before.

Score: 84%

PSE2 Editor's Choice Gold

Compatibility

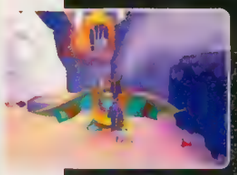
1 or 2 Players

Analog Control Compatible

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

SPYRO
YEAR OF THE DRAGON

BY MARK ANDROVICH

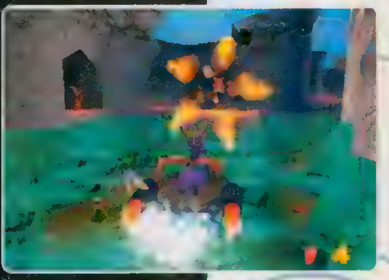


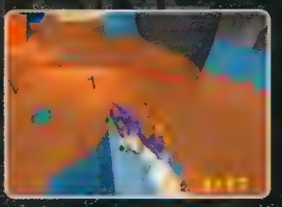
The Spyro series, like Crash Bandicoot before it, has always been a good example of what the PlayStation is capable of in the hands of talented people. With its watercolor landscapes, whimsical music and humorous character design, playing Spyro is akin to stepping inside a Fantasyland ride or a Disney movie (except without the singing). I'm almost embarrassed to admit that I love it, since as a hardcore gamer I'm supposed to be racing cars or shooting zombies — not helping a diminutive purple and orange dragon collect gems! And yet, there is something about Spyro that makes it fun for both children and adults.

Genre	Action/Platform
Publisher	SCEA
Developer	Insomniac
Origin	US
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

What separates Spyro: YOD from other free-roaming adventure games, aside from the excellent camera and smooth frame rate, is the variety. New to this year's version is the ability to play as one of four other animal characters with special abilities. Some of the levels take place from top-down, side-scrolling, or first-person perspectives, with gameplay reminiscent of Gauntlet, Super Mario Bros., and Doom (!). The Egg challenges involve tasks as diverse as racing, shooting, boxing, and even skateboarding! I was amazed that all these different types of "mini-games" worked perfectly well within the confines of Spyro's game engine. They also fit the flow of the game and don't feel like they were thrown in at the last minute.

Spyro has evolved in much the same way that Crash did. The first game was novel, the second game refined the concept to an art form, and the third game adds some new features to make it feel fresh without alienating fans of the original. Unfortunately, it may not be novel enough to compete against its own predecessors with their attractive $19.99 pricing, but in my opinion it is the best Spyro game yet.





SCORE: 98%

PSE2 EDITOR'S CHOICE PLATINUM

BOTTOM LINE

Ten years from now, there won't be many original PlayStation games that people will still be interested in playing. Spyro YOD is an exception. It is one of those rare games that does everything right, and one that you will talk and think about even after you've finished it.

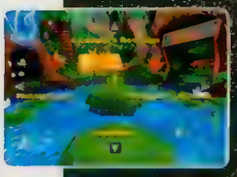
COMPATIBILITY

Analog Control Compatible | 1 Player

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FROGGER 2

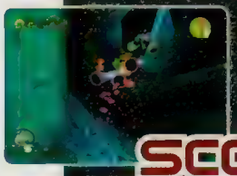
BY MARK ANDROVICH



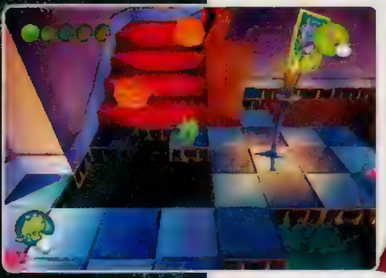
For better or worse, Hasbro's 1997 remake of Frogger single-handedly kicked off the current interest in retrogaming. Sure, there were earlier compilations such as Namco's Museum, but it wasn't until Frogger sold millions of copies that publishers started reviving their older titles in earnest. In the last two years, Asteroids, Centipede, Space Invaders, Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Pong, Q*Bert, Galaga and Breakout have all been remade (to varying degrees of success). It took awhile, but Hasbro is finally introducing a sequel for our hopping hero.

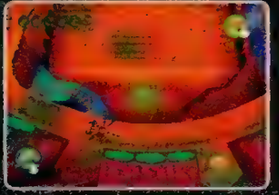
Genre	Action/Platform
Publisher	Hasbro
Developer	Blitz Games
Origin	UK
Format	CD
# of Discs	1
Available	Now!

The overall level of difficulty is much easier than the original, although there are still some frustratingly hard levels (such as Frogs In Space, where you'll have to remember which direction to hop while upside down). Lest you think that all challenge has been removed, coins have been added to each level as a bonus. Getting all 25 of them, which is an exercise in extreme skill and discipline, will open up special levels.



The original coin-op Frogger required quick reflexes to maneuver around objects, and the ability to recognize patterns and anticipate threats. Even with the 3D graphics and new moves — such as the super hop and tongue grab — Frogger 2 retains the underlying gameplay of the original. Unfortunately, the imprecise control doesn't allow for the kind of quick movement necessary, nor does the camera allow players to anticipate threats easily.





SCORE: 86%

SILVER

BOTTOM LINE

While the designers have made several improvements, such as toning down the difficulty, changing the camera, and creating a better multiplayer experience, they neglected to fix the imprecise control. In my book, that's two hops forwards, yet one hop back...

COMPATIBILITY

Analog Control Compatible | 1 or 2 Players

"The most impressive racing engine we've ever seen." –dailyradar.com

"A killer racing experience." –GamePro

"Fantastic graphics, fast speeds, slick cars. Any questions?" –ign.com

★ Online Worldwide Ranking System!

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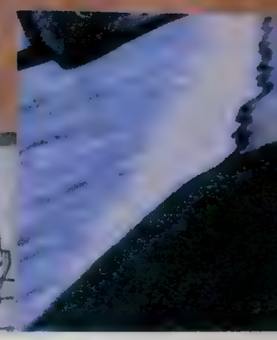
viva la speed!



PlayStation

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Sega Dreamcast.

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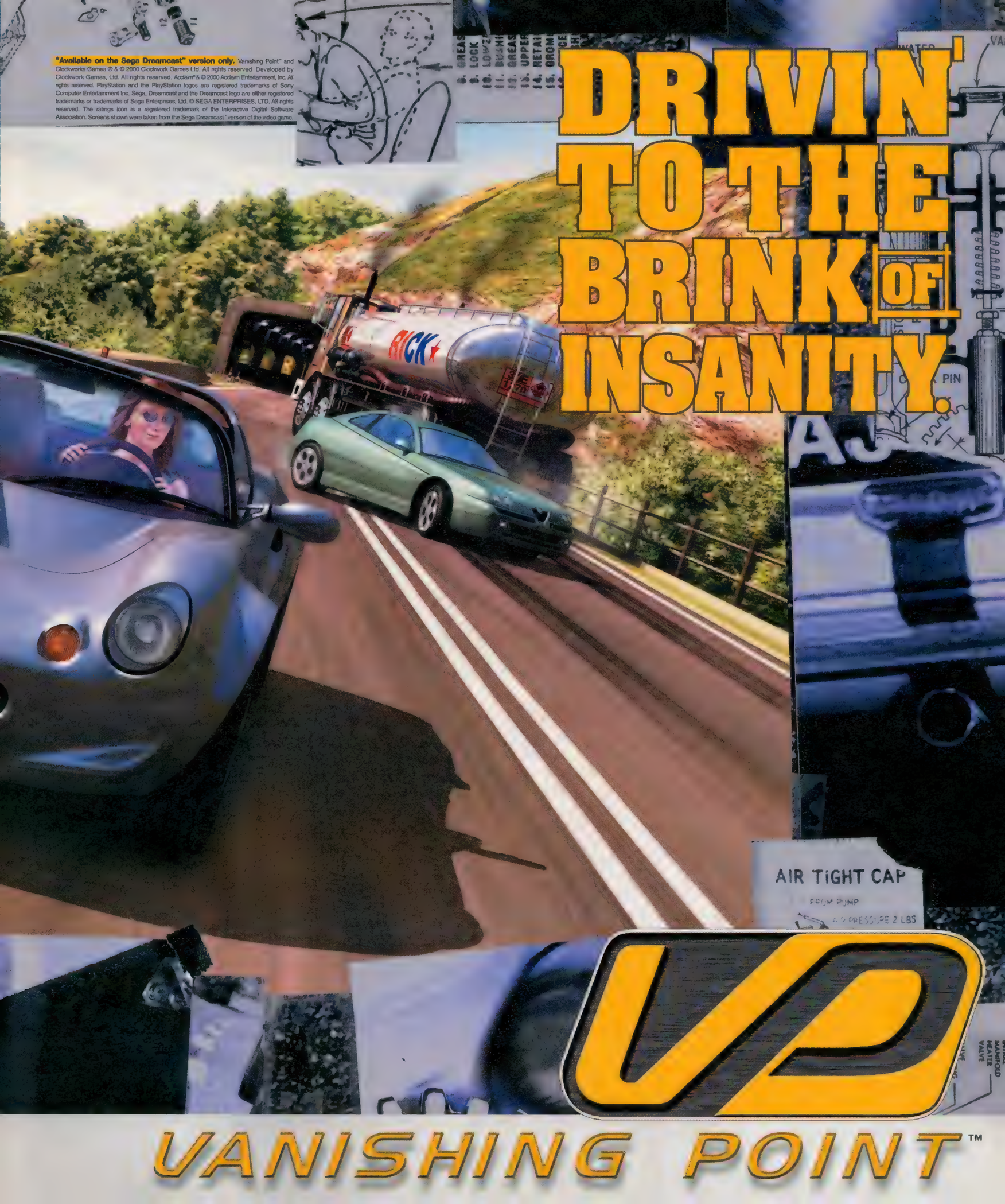

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CADDYSHACK

Warner Brothers **98 Minutes** **Dolby DIgital • Anamorphic Widescreen - 1.85:1 • Rated R**

THE comedy to own, Caddyshack still has us in stitches every time we watch it. As funny as it was in 1980 when it hit the theaters, Caddyshack introduces a cast of hilarious would-be golfers, including not-too-sharp greenskeeper Carl Spackler (Bill Murray), who is waging an all out war against a dancing gopher, pompous Judge Smails (Ted Knight), who will do what it takes to win, even if it means coercion and cheating, loudmouth land developer Al Czervik (Rodney Dangerfield), who's more than happy to let loose with one-liners, insults and tasteless gags whenever he feels fit, Playboy Ty Webb (Chevy Chase), who shoots perfect golf by "becoming the ball," and Caddy Danny Noonan (Micheal O'Keefe), who is trying to earn college money by working at the local country club. Directed by Harold Ramis (National Lampoon's Vacation, Back to School, Ghostbusters, Groundhog Day), Caddyshack has more memorable one-liners than any other comedy ever released (we are living proof of that). It is, without question, the movie that put Rodney Dangerfield, Chevy Chase and Bill Murray on the Hollywood A-list, and that gave the late Ted Knight his finest moments on film.

The latest DVD release (there are two, the first hit retail early on, back in August, '97, and is not in production any more) features a ton of extras and bonus features, which include production notes, theatrical trailers, a Caddyshack: The 19th Hole making of documentary, outtakes, and Interviews and Remembrances by the Cast and Crew. There are very few comedies that can stand up to the test of time, and Caddyshack is easily one of them. Just make sure you stay far, far away from the stinker sequel which, in our opinion, should never have been attempted without the original cast.

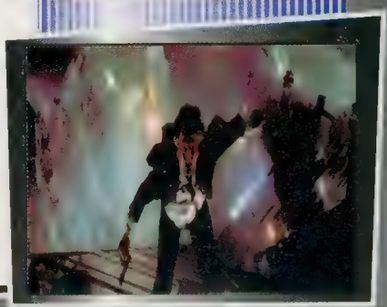
RATING:

DIE HARD

Fox **132 Minutes** **Digitally Mastered • THX Certified • Widescreen • Rated R**

Confirming the belief that the original is always better than the sequel(s), Director John McTiernan's Die Hard was the consummate action flick. Bruce Willis, in his first true breakout role, plays New York City Detective John McClane — a cop who just happens to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Stuck in a high-rise with a group of terrorist thieves, McClane must use his wits, cunning and a little luck to stay one step ahead of the bad boys. Of course, these "bad boys" are lead by Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman in his signature role), and Hans is one nasty Nazi. The movie still ranks as one of the smartest, slickest action films ever produced and it is one of those "Turner Clasics" that you can see over and over again. In fact, a number of our staff members, even though they own the DVD, will still stop and check out the edited-for-TV version whenever they find it as they are channel-surfing. Movie plot aside, Die Hard offers up a lion's share of explosions, action, shooting, fighting and special effects — just what the everyday average Joe wants to see in a movie. The DVD version delivers all of this with a crystal clear, digitally mastered picture and teeth-shattering THX sound. For those of you that plan on hooking up your PlayStation2 to a high-quality Surround Sound system, complete with a Sub Woofer, make sure you wait until the neighbors go on vacation before you crank this bad boy up. While not necessarily sporting any extras, deleted scenes or other goodies (besides cool interactive menus and the original theatrical trailer), the movie is so watchable (we're willing to bet you've seen it more times than you have fingers on your hands), that it should be a permanent fixture in your DVD collection.

RATING:



FINAL WORD

David Jon Winding • Publisher

ANTICIPATION

As I write this column, it is but a mere 45 days until PS2 hits the streets. Well, I guess that's probably a figurative term, since very few units of the initial shipment will be available on retail shelves — they have all been pre-ordered. The anticipation is building for what surely is going to be the biggest hardware launch of all-time. In this very issue, we have reviewed three PS2 games: SSX Snowboarding, Smuggler's Run and Madden NFL 2001, that have been given our highest recommendation, the Editor's Choice: Platinum award, and a number of others that have received our Editor's Choice: Gold award. On top of that, there are a number of games that are going to be available at launch (Tekken Tag Tournament and Midnight Club being the two that come immediately to mind) that we have yet to review.

The launch list has become much more concrete, to the point where I can give you a 90% accurate accounting of what you will be able to buy within the first two weeks of the PS2's arrival:

• SSX Snowboarding • Smuggler's Run • Madden NFL 200 • Ridge Racer V • Tekken Tag Tournament • Theme Park Rollercoaster • NHL 2001 • Fantavision • Midnight Club • Dynasty Warriors 2 • Swing Away Golf • Silent Scope • Gradius III/IV • Armored Core 2 • Evergrace • Eternal Ring • Summoner • TimeSplitters • X-Squad • Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore • Street Fighter EX 3 • ESPN International Track & Field • Kessen • Moto GP • NASCAR 2001 • Ready to Rumble: Round 2

That's a total of 27 games at (or near) launch! The fact that Sony has but one title (Fantavision) makes this list even more impressive. There simply has never been a hardware launch with this kind of scale and variety. On top of all of this, there are a couple of other titles that might make it in this time frame (at least, according to their publishers). Ubi Soft says they are going to have Rayman 2: Enhanced and their Formula 1 game ready to go (we haven't received playable versions of either as of mid-September) and Acclaim has new Bust-A-Move and RC games near completion that they have been showing to members of the gaming press. No matter what your tastes in games, there will be something for you at launch, assuming you are one of the lucky million that make the hardware cut.

If you are a gamer (and we know you are), then it simply doesn't get any better than the upcoming holiday season. For the first time in my memory, your problem won't be findng new games to play, it will be coming up with the money to pay for them all. Get ready to be entertained as never before!

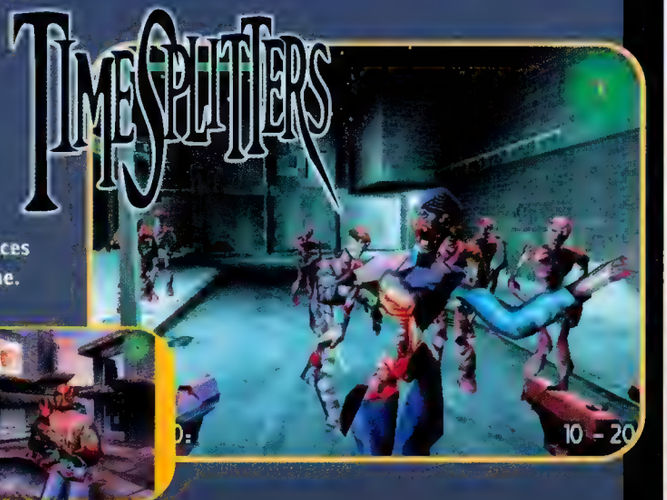
Dave

dwinding@psextreme.com

NEXT ISSUE

On the cover

On our December cover, we will be featuring Eidos' new PS2 FPS, TimeSplitters. This frag-fest harkens back to the simpler times in the world of shooters and is inspired more by "Doom" then "Half Life" or any of the more objective-based FPS games. The kicker in TimeSplitters is the game's level editor, which allows players to save up to 100 user-created levels to a single memory card. We will put TS through the paces next month and give you a behind-the-scenes look at the game.



PlayStation®2

RELEASE DATE: PLAYSTATION 2 LAUNCH

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DELIVER AT ALL COSTS

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- Levels are over 5 square miles, each with a "drive anywhere" environment filled with other smugglers and law enforcement officials.
- Choose from 35 different vehicles, each with unique modifications and strengths.
- Compete head-to-head or run "pick up and deliver" missions against AI opponents or in full multiplayer mode.
- Maneuver your way through arid desert, icy tundra, or rocky mountain forest.
- Real Time Damage Models allow you to watch the parts fly as you pay the price for punishing collisions!

SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON GUIDANCE RECORDINGS

THEY'RE
BIGGER,
FASTER,
SMARTER.
AND RIGHT
BEHIND YOU.
DINO CRISIS 2
Yes, Regina is back in the action-packed sequel to the blockbuster survival-horror hit. Sent in for search and rescue, she is now armed with even more dino-fighting, heavy artillery. Only Regina is prepared for the adrenaline-pumping battles the recon team will soon encounter. More action! More intensity! More prehistoric predators! One question remains... are you the hunter – or the hunted?
MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Animated Blood and Gore
Animated Violence
PlayStation
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